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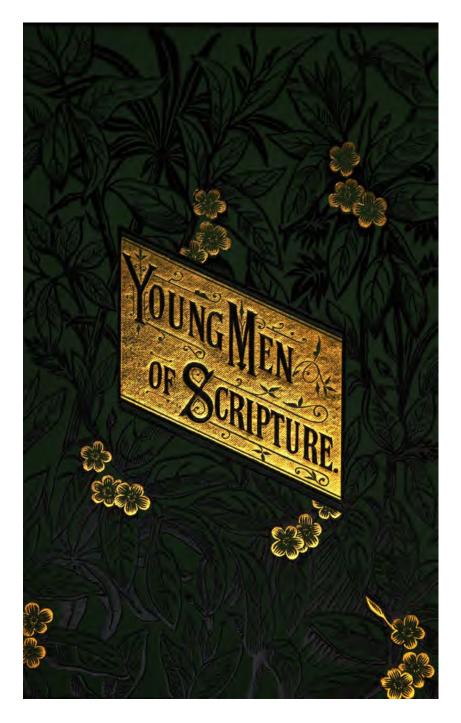
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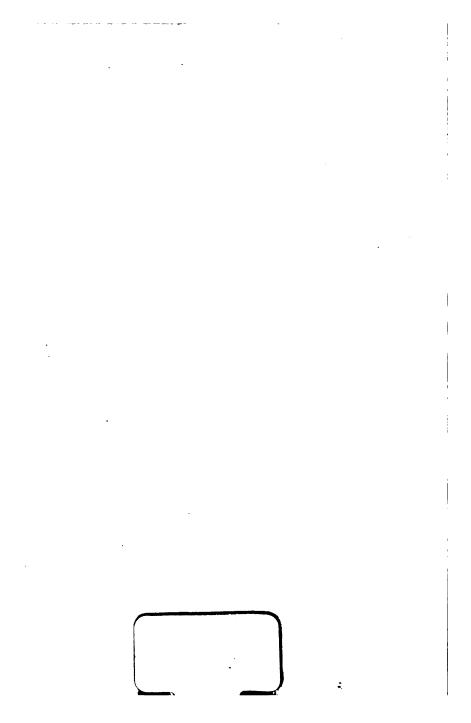
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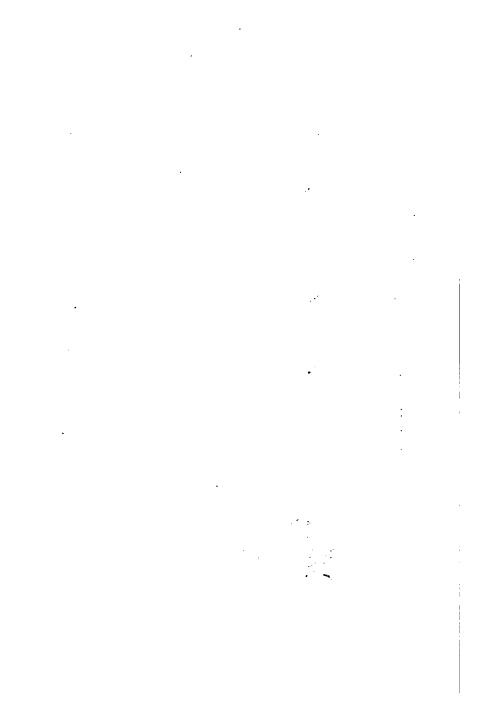




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YOUNG MEN OF SCRIPTURE

BY THE

REV. J. HILES HITCHENS,

Minister of Eccleston Square Church, Belgrave Road, London.

Author of "Bible Waters," "The Furnace," "The Face
of the King," "The Penalty," &c., &c.

"Every man is a volume if you know how to read him."-W. Ellery Channing.

"Much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by example than by rule."—

Spenser.



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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY, K.G.,

PRESIDENT OF THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

THIS BOOK IS

Medicated,

AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE

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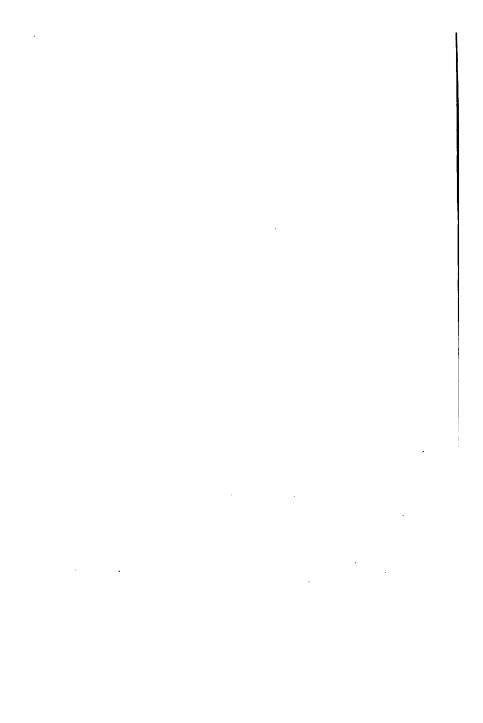
HIS LORDSHIP'S NOBLE EFFORTS TO BENEFIT SOCIETY

GENERALLY, AND SPECIALLY TO SECURE
THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL

WELL-BEING

OF

YOUNG MEN.



PREFACE.

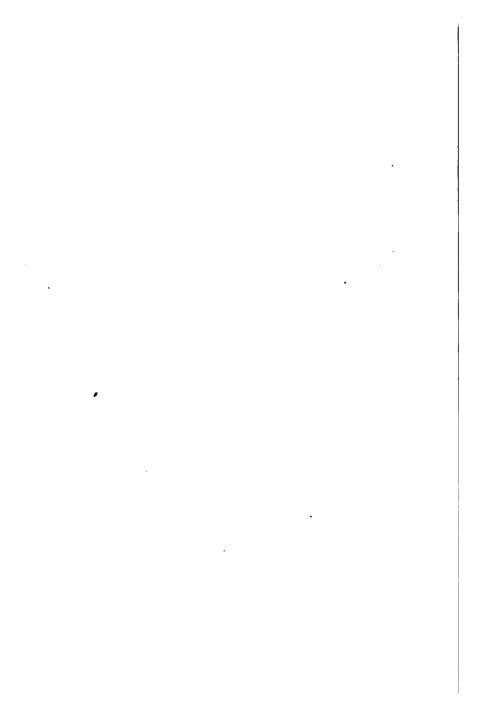
THESE Lectures were delivered in the ordinary course of my ministry, on Sabbath evenings in 1876 and 1877, to the young men of my congregation, and were printed, as delivered, in the *Christian World Pulpit*. The Great Head of the Church deigned to bless them to many who heard, and to some, beyond the limits of my own charge, who subsequently read them. By the generous permission of the proprietor of the valuable periodical above mentioned, these Lectures now appear in a collective form.

A few alterations have been made, but the personal style of pulpit address is preserved.

May the Divine Spirit use this volume as the vehicle by which light may be conveyed to anxious minds, strength to enfeebled wills, and comfort to saddened souls!

J. H. H.

90, GLOUCESTER STREET, BELGRAVIA, S.W., July, 1879.



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THE

YOUNG MEN OF SCRIPTURE.

LECTURE I.

CAIN AND ABEL; OR, THE EFFECTS OF ENVY.

THEN an English juryman is about to take the oath. he receives a charge in which occur the following words: "You shall truly and justly try this cause; you shall present no one from malice; you shall excuse no one from favour." The counsel so conveyed should be remembered by all who undertake to write history or biography, that they may portray objects in their natural colour, and delineate character with an unprejudiced and impartial mind—that excellences may be admired and copied, and evils censured and shunned. Unfortunately, there have been too many instances in which bias has influenced the mind of the author. and women have been described as possessed of angelic traits, too much of whose temper and transactions has been known for the world to do other than ridicule the True, heaven-born charity forbids our representation. unnecessarily exhibiting the defects of a fellow-It is not often expedient, and mortal's character.

very seldom seemly, to emblazon a man's misdeeds, and publish to the world his mistakes. When Appelles drew a portrait of Alexander, King of Macedon, he sketched the monarch with his finger on the scar received in battle, and thus the countenance was not disfigured. An ingenious device was that for concealing the blemish of the monarch. The conduct of the heathen artist may be commended to your imitation in the usual course of life. In the daily round of duty, aim to give as little prominence as possible to a brother's defects. Pass with silence over his mistakes. But if ever you put pen to paper with a view to write a memoir, or brush to canvas to produce a portrait, then represent the person as he really is. Let not fear cloak the failing, nor bitterness magnify the offence, nor fondness exaggerate the virtue.

Thus the writers of sacred history discharged their duty. One of the strongest evidences of the truthfulness of what they record—aye, an incontrovertible proof—is furnished by their fidelity. With a veracity worthy of all admiration, because so unequivocal, they tell of guilt and error, even though they criminate themselves. Indeed, so impartial are they, so minute in details of both good and evil, and so thoroughly do they manipulate, dissect, and unfold the motives of the human heart, that we are constrained to confess that the writers were under the Divine guidance of the Spirit of all truth. This, no doubt, we shall more clearly see in the course of meditations lying before us.

We are about to study the lives of some of the young men recorded in the Bible. In doing so let us remember that our object is to improve, elevate, and ennoble our own lives. The characters that will pass under review

Cain and Abel.

have gone to join the company of the spirit-world; but we are yet here. Our probation season is the present. The curtain has fallen, and the generations of the past have retired from the theatre of the world. But we are yet upon the stage of life playing our part in the solemn drama. We may not, indeed, be furnishing material for any historian's pen—as did they of whom we are to The thick veil of oblivion may drop from the hands of obscurity over all our career. But our life is none the less important to ourselves, and of none the less value to those about us. "A precious burden is the life we bear." It is a burden that may be made beautiful and fragrant—a burden that may be borne with dignity and delight—a burden that we may ultimately lay, with gratitude and gladness and glory, at the feet of the Infinite One, only to see it transformed into eternal rest and development. That this may be so I summon you, young men in particular, to a devout, thoughtful, and earnest study of the lives of some who have been admonitions or attractions,—beacons to caution, or loadstones to allure,—and who, being dead, yet speak.

At this time I call your attention to Cain and Abel, the first two men that were born into the world.

These brothers grew up together under the supervision and control of Adam and Eve, and possibly were for years both dutiful and devout. Trained to habits of active labour, and not to indolence and ease, Cain adopted the occupation of his father, and became a tiller of the ground, whilst Abel preferred the calling of a shepherd. The elder brother's disposition was one that made the energetic life of an agriculturist most congenial to his taste; whilst the younger, being fonder of retirement' and contemplation, found pleasure in the

pastoral life. For a time these young men pursued their avocations in peace and harmony. Both had been taught their obligations to God, as well as the duty of industrious toil. Both grew up with the conviction that it was incumbent on them to worship the Eternal One, and consecrate a portion of their possessions to Him. Cain observing with pleasure the fruits of the earth as they grew and ripened, and feeling that not one grain would germinate nor one ear of corn ripen without the blessing of Heaven, brought of the fruits of the ground as an offering to God. Abel, recognising the goodness of the Lord in the increase and preservation of his cattle, resolved to present the firstlings of his flock; but deeply sensible that he was a sinner before Heaven, and painfully impressed with his own demerit, he slew the lamb he had reared with so much care, and offered it as a sacrifice to the Most High. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering," for Paul says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" or literally, "a more sacrifice," that is, a more full, complete, and satisfactory sacrifice.

Now the difference between these two sons of our remotest ancestors is at once marked. They became representatives of two vast classes of men, existing everywhere and in all ages—one of whom follows the uncertain and unsafe light of natural reason; and the other the clear and comforting beams of Divine precepts. We cannot suppose that God would leave the ignorant and fallen creature to determine the manner in which he should approach his Creator. As the Eternal at first gave a positive precept to Adam, when in his pristine integrity and intelligence, which indicated man's duty, so beyond doubt, when man had forfeited that primeval

purity and wisdom, the Lord would give him distinct injunctions. Man then, more than ever, needed information as to what to do to please the Supreme Being, and what not to do to evade His displeasure. Hence, I think it most rational to conclude that God had made known to Adam and his sons the wav of access to Himself—that He had divinely appointed sacrifice as that way—and that it was fully understood, from the time of the fatal fall that, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." This, moreover, is confirmed by the conduct of Abel. cannot be thought probable that Abel by his unaided reason would "conceive the idea of inflicting death as an acceptable service to that very Being who had seemed so anxious to exclude death from His dominions." It does not seem "a natural suggestion for man to come to God by an act of cruelty and blood -by the infliction of pain and the extinction of enjoyment." I believe that the two brothers had been plainly taught, by their father, that the God of Love had contrived a method by which sinful man may secure His favour-that that method was by the shedding of blood, and the presentation of a sin-offering—and that such sacrificial appointment was typical of the one great atoning sacrifice that should be offered in the fulness of time. When, then, Cain came with the fruits of the earth alone, he simply acknowledged his dependence on God, his gratitude to God as his benefactor, and his desire to praise Him. But he gave no evidence that he recognised the breach between himself and his Lord. He indicated no conscious need of confession of sin. and dependence on a Mediator. These things, however, were clearly present in Abel's sacrifice. The difference between the two men and their offerings is manifest. Cain came to God with a grateful heart; Abel with a contrite spirit. Cain came to adore the goodness of Jehovah; Abel to sue for His mercy and forgiveness. Cain was self-satisfied; Abel self-upbraiding. Cain was a legal formalist; Abel a penitent believer. Cain, like the Pharisee of whom Jesus spake, said, "Lord, I thank Thee;" Abel, like the Publican, cried, "God be merciful to me!" Cain trusted in his own imperfect righteousness; Abel in the work and worth of a Mediator. Hence Cain went from the presence of the Infinite unjustified, whilst Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous."

How the Divine approval of Abel's sacrifice was conveyed, we cannot say—whether by any visible token, or audible voice, we are not told; but it was so unmistakable a communication that both brothers knew their position before the unerring Judge. The result upon the mind of Abel some of us can understand from our own joyful experience. Sweet peace brooded over his spirit, and he felt God's loving kindness to be better than life. But on Cain, alas! the effects were the reverse. Instead of being grieved, he became angry. "He was very wroth, and his countenance fell." He assumed a downcast, gloomy, sullen aspect. He walked alone, musing upon what the devil told him was injustice on God's side, and fraud on the part of his brother. He fed the spirit of envy. Though the Lord condescended to remonstrate with him, and to warn him against further evils, yet the loving and timely message was in The anger grew into morose dissatisfaction, till his spirit became exasperated, and he was goaded on to hatred and revenge. He allowed the evil

one to harass and harden his soul, day by day, until he resolved upon the irremediable deed of blood. Abel, fostering no evil, feared none. Innocent and unsuspicious, he was easily decoved by his brother into the solitude of the field. Suddenly the deliberate resolution was remorselessly executed. Cain rose up against his brother, and slew him. In a moment there lay stretched upon the turf the ghastly corpse of the good and gentle Abel. Death for the first time invaded the realm of humanity—but it was death by violence. it was from a brother's hand—and it was the first death in the world's history for conscience sake, for truth's sake, for Christ's sake. Happy Abel! he was to rank among the noble army of martyrs! Unhappy Cain! he was the first to embrue his hands in a fellowcreature's blood—the first to break one of the most stringent and solemn laws of God!

The history of these two young men is seriously suggestive. We see the progress of envy till it ended in fratricide. We see how, led on by evil passion, the murderer was left to wander in the world with Heaven's curse upon him, with a condemning conscience within him, and a dark, dreadful, threatening future before him. "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Against this spirit of envy I desire now affectionately to caution you, young men. Do not infer that I think young men are specially given to this evil, and that therefore, I address you on this subject. It is not so. Envy is, alas, common to all classes. It may be found as much among young women as among young men. It is rife in every grade of the social circle. It creeps into the breast of the veteran of threescore years and ten

as easily as into the heart of the lad of twelve summers. Aye, even among the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, it too often raises its head and causes lamentable scenes of strife and confusion. No; I speak particularly to you, young men, because I am anxious that from your start in life you should avoid one of the most prolific sources of sin and consequent anxiety, disappointment, sorrow, disgrace, and death. I address you specially, because now, in youth, the movements of your minds can be more easily controlled; and if now you check the first risings of envy, you may pass your life comparatively free from the fierce internal struggles with which so many are acquainted. But if you allow the spirit of envy to strengthen, you may one day be wholly borne away by it, as by a resistless torrent. I beg you, then, to note that-

Envy grows by degrees. Socrates says, "Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of murder and revenge. the beginner of secret sedition, and the perpetual tormenter of virtue." The pride of Cain was mortified by the distinction God put upon Abel. This feeling of vexation led to anger; "he was wroth." The anger settled down into permanent dislike and sullen jealousy -"his countenance fell." And that abiding hatred ripened into the terrible deed of blood. Thus it is always. It is said that "love and tears are learned without any master." Equally true is it of envy. It is soon acquired. Even the babe may be led to foster it; and parents will have not a little to answer for in this matter. caution should be exercised in the early training of children. A mother finding her infant refuse his food will induce the little one to take it by saying, "Then brother shall have it!" At once the spirit of envy is

aroused and appealed to, whilst the child eats in spite of his temper. Forth from that parent's arms there goes one with the demon spirit of envy already largely developed within him. What wonder if in after years he has recourse to many a stratagem rather than allow his brother to possess a privilege before him?

The success of others induces envy. When John the Baptist heard that the people left him to follow Jesus. what a Christ-like spirit did he evince! With the voice of hallowed and pacific contentment he said, "My joy is fulfilled. He must increase and I must decrease." But when some men hear of the worldly prosperity of their acquaintances and friends, or when they see the scheme of their neighbours a pronounced boon to the public, they begin at once to employ every means of detraction. They first express themselves as incredulous of the fact; then, when the assertion is placed beyond question, they grow restless and uneasy; and next they commence to find all the conceivable faults that can be magnified into view. In Æsop's fables it was the tailless fox that advocated the disuse of tails; and it was the grapes that the longing Reynard could not reach that were by him pronounced sour. So are there multitudes, alas, who pooh-pooh and decry the possessions and privileges they cannot attain, and the deeds they could not, for very life, perform. The prosperity of another is an adversity to the envious man. He says. as the falling raindrop said to the soaring lark, "I hate you, because you are going up and I am going down." He quarrels with God if his neighbour's field of corn yields more than his. No law is perfect if he was not conspicuous at its making. No society is rightly governed if he is not prominent in office. No man shall

have the glory if he happens to miss it. No inheritor shall peaceably possess the dwelling if his claim is rejected. Some good happening to his acquaintance is as much a vexation to him as if some dire evil had happened to himself. He cannot brook the idea of a rival or an equal. The Emperor Caligula was a man of this order. He directed Caius to be put to death because the purple gown he wore was so conspicuous as to call off the eyes of spectators from himself. He commanded that several persons in the city should be shaved, because they had more plentiful hair than he had. He insisted upon Proculus, who was singularly beautiful and of lofty stature, descending into the amphitheatre and fighting among the combatants as a gladiator. Being present once when a particular gladiator obtained more than ordinary applause, he hurried away in a fury, indignantly protesting against the Romans according more honour to a poor fencer than to himself—the Emperor! Plutarch says, "Dionysius the tyrant, out of 'envy, punished Philoxenius, the musician, because he could sing, and Plato, the philosopher, because he could dispute better than himself." Men of this character still exist, exist to use their little influence in trying to undo what others have done, or to malign the chief actors in some famous work in which they have had no share. There is a wide difference between envy and emulation. Emulation admires the great and good, and, whilst imitating, applauds the pattern; but envy whilst imitating decries. Emulation is marked by generosity, and seeks only to equal or surpass the rival; but envy aims to reduce, or altogether remove, the rival. Emulation, like a legitimate and peaceful architect, erects a reputation alongside of his neighbours; but envy, like

a base revolutionist, determines to erect a reputation upon the ruins of another's fame. Emulation, if unsuccessful, sorrows, but the sorrow is only that he has failed; envy if unsuccessful also sorrows, but the sorrow is because another has succeeded. Emulation is a God-given, royal, just, and generous passion; but envy is hell-born, and bears all the features of its sinful origin. Emulation is appealed to and fostered by Holy Writ; but envy stands exposed to the scathing lightnings of Divine condemnation.

"O envy! hide thy bosom, hide it deep:
A thousand snakes, with black envenomed mouths,
Nest there, and hiss, and feed through all thy heart."

But not only does worldly success foster envy in the hearts of some; spiritual peace and prosperity in one man, or community of men, will often beget and cherish this evil in onlookers. It was the spiritual acceptance of Abel, and all the sweet tranquillity which followed. that so fed the destructive passion in the breast of Cain. Nor, alas, is this evil dead in the very place where itsexistence should be least suspected. A young woman, who was under deep religious convictions, and who was anxious to find Christ, continued in that state for a long time, whilst her youthful companions were led to a joyful realisation of God's grace. When at last she trusted her all in the hands of Jesus, a friend asked her why she was kept so long away from the Saviour. plied "I was unwilling that any of my companions should rejoice in hope until I did myself." It was not till that selfish, envious feeling was dislodged, and she became not only willing, but even anxious that others should be saved, even if she were not, that she found the Lord. Among Christian workers too, how often this base passion is manifest! Is there nothing of it witnessed

between one denomination and another? Is there nothing of it found between two or more churches of the Is it never seen between the churches of same order? Christ of the same town or locality? Is it never discovered in a particular church among the servants of Richard Baxter drew a picture of envy in the Lord? the Church of Christ 200 years ago, which may, I fear, too often suit the present times. He says: "So far are some gone in this Satanical vice that it is the common practice, and a considerable part of their business, to keep down the estimation of those they dislike, and defame others in the slyest and most plausible way. Yea, so far does this cursed vice prevail that in great congregations that have need of the help of many workers, we can scarcely get two in equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God. But unless one of them be quite below the other in parts, and content to be so esteemed, they are contending for precedency, and envying each other's interests, and walking with strangeness and jealousy toward each other, to the shame of their profession, and the great wrong of the congregation." Little by little does this feeling of envy grow and disclose itself. It is like the letting out of water. Where envy exists, it will distort the holiest action, misrepresent the simplest words, and, like a worm, feed and fatten on the fairest fruits. This brings me to remark that

Envy leads to the most lamentable of sins. In the case of Cain it led to the most unnatural of crimes. He and his brother had been reared in the same home, nursed on the same lap, cheered by the same voice, protected by the same care, and taught to

kneel at the same altar. They had grown up together, pursuing the same boyish sports, and wandering hand in hand through the same beautiful meadows. But envy led Cain to take that dear brother's life. Envy nerved him for a crime of the greatest enormity—a crime which was irremediable, a crime which assumed Heaven's high prerogative over life and death, a crime which

"Broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
The life o' the building."

How truly does the apostle say, "Lust, having conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Hence in Scripture envy is generally classed with other great sins, and in its position is named first as the seed and source of all the rest. Paul speaks of men who are "full of envying, murder, and debate." In writing to the Corinthians, he says, "There is among you envying, strife, and factions." writing to the Galatians, he speaks of "envyings, wraths, strifes, seditions." And Jesus said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, blasphemies, thefts, adulteries." The heart is the fountain of words and acts; and if envy dwell there, the fountain is poisoned, and all the streams will be deleterious and death-spreading. When Joseph's brethren envied him, "they conspired to slay him." Of Saul it is written, "He eyed (that is, envied) David ever afterwards." And of the priests who aided in the death of the world's Saviour, it is written, "For envy they delivered him."

I need not say that envy does not always lead to such a colossal crime as that of which Cain was guilty. But it invariably leads to sins the enormity of which we very

faintly estimate. There is many an envious man or woman who is virtually a murderer in the eye of God. Every passion has been yielded to, every unholy motive has become regnant which dwells in the assassin's breast. All things are there to make the man a murderer but the outward act. He who searches the hearts and tries the reins of men will bring these secret enormities to light one day.

But there is a murder of which envy is still too guilty. I mean the murder of a man's reputation. Envy is seldom free from that stain. There are sons and daughters of the murderous Cain still among us, not armed with a bludgeon or a sword, but wielding a more deadly weapon -an envenomed tongue. Dear sirs, I desire most earnestly to warn you against this prevalent evil, and to implore you to shun the person-male or female-who is guilty of it. Poison more fatal than that of asps is under the lips. Death as well as life is in the power of the tongue. "It is not the body so much that suffers when the unruly tongue moves against a man, it is the spirit, the spirit that bleeds. The man dies and sees not who it was that hurt him; he perishes in the best part of himself, his good name is blasted, and what has he left worth possessing?" Sirs, there are women, and there are some womanish men, who shrink with pallor from the sight of human blood—who cannot be constrained to cast a glance at a corpse—but who can, with the utmost complacency and glee, gather, like so many vultures, around the murdered, mangled reputation of a brother. and share in its mutilation. Of all the cowards beneath the blue heavens, there is none greater than the men or women who deal in slander. They shoot their arrows in the dark. They stab you when you have not the oppor-

tunity of defending yourself. Garroter-like, they steal behind your back and throttle all the good you have attempted. Would to God I could so portray the characters of such persons, and so paint their crime, that you should shun association with them as you would with the murderer now lying under condemnation in the gaol. It is this evil which is weakening the hands of many an earnest worker for Christ. It is this evil which is robbing the militant Church of much of its life-blood. It is this which is grieving the Holy Spirit, and giving the Devil a cause for triumph. Dear young brethren, we look to you to counteract this prejudicial influence. you scorn and detest the evil. Use your influence in every direction to check the moral murderer; for rest assured that where envy works with the weapon of the tongue, it will level without distinction both good and bad-men will fall so rent and torn, and so unmercifully butchered as, sometimes, to be wholly unable to recover from the wounds their character suffers, or the anguish of heart they are compelled to experience.

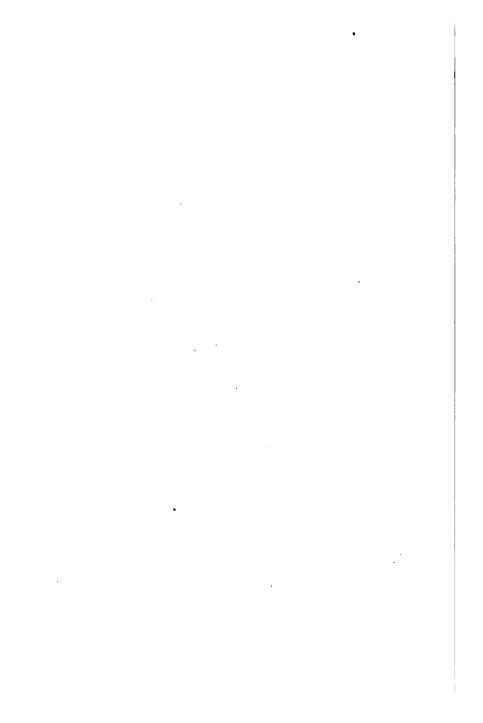
This brings me to observe,

That envy involves the man who indulges it in punishment. When Cain killed Abel he had gratified his evil passions, and had removed his hated rival out of his sight. Was he then at rest? His brother no longer stood between him and the favour of God; did he therefore enjoy that favour? No! No! From that moment every object about him seemed endowed with eyes to glare at him and tongues to accuse him. His conscience stung him like a scorpion. God spake to him, and said, "Where is thy brother?" With a hardened heart, he vainly thought to cover the crime he had committed by a lie—"I know not; am I my brother's

keeper?" God then arose to vengeance, declared His full cognizance of all that had taken place—cursed the ground Cain tilled—put a mark upon him—and Cain went out from the presence of the Lord; out from all joy—out from all peace of mind—out from all holy associations, to be a wanderer, a fugitive, a vagabond. Soon did he find cause to cry in the bitterness of his woe, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

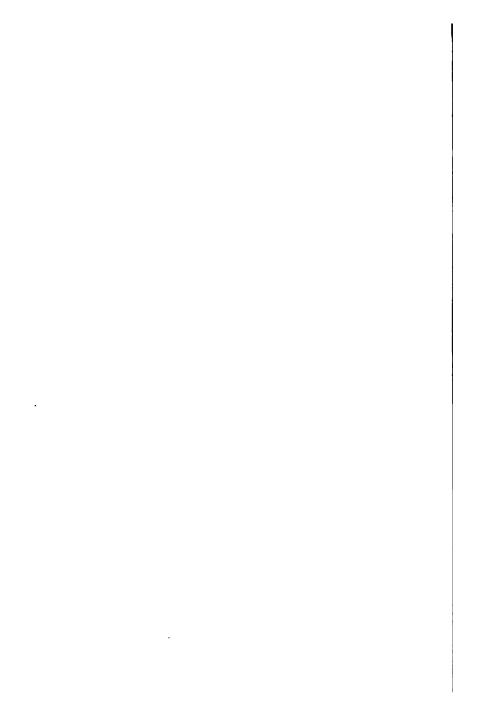
Ah, sirs, envy, like the flames of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, does more harm to him who seeks the ruin of another than to the object of envy. Like a ball thrown at a neighbour's house, it rebounds. arrow shot up in the air, it comes down again, and often falls most fatally on the head of him who shot it. History tells us of a statue that was erected to a celebrated victor in the public games of Greece, named Theogenes. The erection of this statue so excited the envious hatred of one of his rivals that he went every night and strove to throw the statue down by repeated blows. Ultimately he succeeded, but alas, the statue fell upon him, and he was crushed to death beneath it. Such is generally the end of the man who allows himself to be carried away by the spirit of envy. He may succeed for a time in ruining his rival's fame, and tarnishing his rival's glory, but, in doing it, he crushes his own soul, ruins his own peace, and hope, and strength, The action of envy upon the man who and character. indulges it is suicidal. It is to the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, what rust is to iron. Like the fly, which in putting out the candle burns itself. Like the bee, it loseth its sting and life together. Solomon says. "Envy is the rottenness of the bones." There may be some short-lived gratification associated with some sins,

but this has no pleasure. It is all pain to the man who indulges it. Physically he suffers. He is the prey of a continuous feverish worry. The old Puritan, Adams, quaintly says: "He keeps a disease fat which will ever keep him lean. If it were not for his soul, the devil could scarce tell what to do with his body. If you miss him in a stationer's shop jeering at books, or at a sermon cavilling at doctrines, or amongst his neighbour's cattle grudging at their fine condition, or in the shambles plotting massacres, yet thou shalt be sure to find him in Mentally he suffers. He cannot think with a fairly balanced mind upon any subject that concerns mankind. He must look at all questions through the green spectacles of jealousy. His judgment thus becomes partial and unfair, and his opinion of little worth. Spiritually he suffers. His mind is not kept in perfect peace. He is under the dominion of the lust of envy which slays all good that might be planted in his spirit. The fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith-cannot flourish under the blight of envy. Eternally he suffers. If he yield to the leadings of envy it will involve him in some of the offences which exclude from Paradise, and drive the soul "out from the presence of the Lord." If the sad outward fruits of envy are never seen, yet the spiritual life must be so terribly hindered in its development, and stunted in its growth, that the man's position in the other world will be less glorious, because more distant from the throne of the Eternal. As you desire your physical, mental, spiritual, and everlasting well-being, let me entreat you to shun the evil spirit of envy.



LECTURE II.

ISAAC; OR THE BEAUTY OF FILIAL OBEDIENCE.



LECTURE II.

ISAAC; OR THE BEAUTY OF FILIAL OBEDIENCE.

THE careers of men greatly vary according to the positions in which Providence may place them, and the diverse temperaments with which God has Some live for public service, and seem endowed them. designed, like the oak or the poplar, to be conspicuous in the forest of the world. Others court retirement, and seem, like the modest violet, adapted only to shed sweet odour in shady nooks. Some delight in deeds of daring. scenes of difficulty, and are most at home when all the manliness of their nature is brought into strenuous exer-Others find the greatest pleasure in unobtrusive attention to the quiet amenities of life. Some court the fierce light of popularity, others the gentle gleams of privacy. Some love to be abroad among men, others cling fondly to all the sweets of home.

Now Isaac was one of the latter class. He was a man of retired habits—a man of peaceful disposition—a man who yielded to the full force of domestic ties; but a man who, by the example and influence of his beautiful piety and admirable virtues, has greatly instructed and blessed humanity. Indeed, more, that is lastingly beneficial, may be learned from the quiet career of Isaac than from the noisy, warlike, and victorious doings of

most of earth's chieftains and conquerors. The study of Isaac's life leads one to say with Solomon, "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city!"

That he was exposed to many trials in life none of us wonder. But it is worthy of notice—if as yet it has escaped our observation—that almost all his trials, certainly all the most searching, arose from his own There was a sense in which the dear kindred. patriarch's greatest foes were they of his own house. The persons who stood nearest to him by the ties of nature, were often farthest from him in sympathy. They who were most expected to be sources of comfort were too generally causes of anxiety and pain. In his very infancy he was hated and scorned by his brother; his father's act of sacrifice must have severely tested his faith; his mother's death was a bitter trial; his jealous son's struggle for superiority grieved his heart; the idolatrous marriage of Esau vexed his righteous spirit; the deception practised upon him by his wife and younger son pained his mind; whilst his servants' contention with powerful neighbours was an annoyance. And yet, despite all these things, how beautiful was his life and how deserving of imitation are his excellencies!

The special feature in the character of Isaac to which I desire to call your attention, dear young brethren, is the filial obedience of the man. This, I think, may be traced on several occasions, manifesting itself most clearly and convincingly. It might be inferred from the fact that for seventy-five years of his life Isaac was most closely united to his father, and very largely under the direction and control of his parent. But I prefer to take a moment' glance at the special circumstances

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in his history in which the excellency is strikingly displayed.

The ever-memorable transaction of Abraham's offering his son as a sacrifice first claims notice. According to Josephus, Isaac was 25 years of age when the strange and staggering command was given by Heaven, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee unto the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Without hesitation, strong in faith and supremely desirous of pleasing God, Abraham rose early in the morning and made all necessary arrangements for the journey. Having called Isaac and summoned two of his young men to attend them, they started out for the spot, in the land of Moriah, that the Lord had chosen. At his age, Isaac was conversant with the rites and ceremonies of his religion, and knew well the manner in which expiation was made for sin. He was fully aware that animals were sacrificed, and the blood of bulls and goats shed. Seeing, therefore, that they were conveying with them all that was necessary except the victim, it is most natural to suppose that the mind of the young man was much exercised as to the intention of his parent. But not a word is recorded till father and son alone are ascending the mountain side. Then the son addressed to his parent one of the most trying questions ever propounded, "Behold the fire and the wood: where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" "If," says Bishop Hall, "Abraham's heart could have known how to relent, that question of his dear, innocent, and pious son had melted it into compassion. I know not whether that word, 'My father,' did not strike Abraham as deep as the knife of Abraham could strike his son." The answer was evasive

-"My son, God will provide himself a lamb." Isaac accepted the reply as sufficient. He had been trained to trust in, reverence, and defer to his father. He was confident that Abraham would neither do nor say aught Hence, with thorough that was hasty or imprudent. acquiescence, he continued the journey. When the spot was reached an altar was reared, the wood was laid thereon, and then the intention of the father was disclosed The sacred penman has passed over in to the son. silence the sad scene which then ensued; but the Jewish historian, Josephus, records a conversation which passed between the two. Abraham says, "Oh, my son, begged of God in a thousand prayers, and at length unexpectedly obtained: ever since you were born, with what tenderness and solicitude have I brought you up! proposing to myself no higher felicity than to see you become a man, and to leave you the heir of my possessions. the God who bestowed you upon me demands you again. Prepare to yield the sacrifice with alacrity. up to Him who at all seasons and in all situations has prosecuted us with loving-kindness and tender mercy. You came into the world under the necessity of dying, and the manner of your death is to be singular and illustrious, presented in sacrifice by your own father to the great Father of all who, we may presume, considers it as unfit and unbecoming that you should depart out of this life by disease, in war, or by any other of the usual calamities to which human nature is subject, but who waits to receive your spirit, departing amidst the prayers and vows of your affectionate parent, that He may place it in perfect blessedness with Himself. There you shall still be the consolation and support of my old age—not, indeed, by your presence and conversation, but bequeathing me, when

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you depart, the presence and blessing of the Almighty." Then Isaac is recorded as replying with cheerfulness in these words; "I should be unworthy of life were I capable of showing reluctance to obey the will of my father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me to the altar; how much more when my heavenly Father redemands His own?" Isaac then submitted to be bound. It must have been a voluntary surrender to his father's will, for we cannot suppose it possible that an old man of 125 years of age could have bound a young man of 25 years, in the very fulness of life and energy, unless the youth had consented. It was not the superior strength of the father, nor so much the authority of the parent, that prevailed to bring everything to the crisis. It was the filial obedience, the beautiful, child-like confidence in and reverence for the father on Isaac's part. By Divine interposition, you know, the life of so dutiful and pious a son was spared. But one cannot read the whole narrative without seeing that the faith of Isaac is shown as well as that of Abraham. The obedience of the son was as prompt as that of the father. If praise be accorded Abraham for his resignation, equal praise is due to Isaac for his thorough submission. Happy is the father who has such a son! Aye, thrice happy is the son who so reverences and obeys his father! How few young men of the present day would have done as Isaac did! How many would have ridiculed the purposes. spurned the entreaties, and repudiated the plans of the venerable patriarch! How many would rather have foregone all prospect of present and future peace with relatives and friends than submit to such requests as those made to Isaac!

The Jewish Rabbins, who abound in legendary

stories, tell us that the devil, who had exulted in the prospect of seeing Isaac fall a prey to the knife of his father, was filled with vexation at his disappointment; and that to revenge himself he caused the death of Sarah, by conveying to her intelligence to the effect that her beloved son was actually slain. There is no necessity to have recourse to such a legend to explain the decease of the mother of Isaac. She was 127 years of age, and it is no marvel at such a period if nature sank beneath the weight of days. But the death of Sarah was a sore trial to both the husband and the son. Isaac cherished that mother with pious attention during her life. Her knee had been an altar for his prayers. a desk for his lessons, a tribunal for his faults. arms had been a city of refuge in his juvenile calamities. Her voice had been music to his heart, to quell the rising of evil passion, and charm away the spirit of gloom. On her heart Isaac's name had been more deeply engraven than was the name of either tribe upon the breastplate of the high priest. The love of that fond mother was reciprocated by Isaac. He was content to live beneath the parental roof, and share in the happiness of home so long as that mother lived; and when she died he deeply and tenderly lamented her departure. By her death the question of Isaac's future was brought more clearly before the mind for settlement. Isaac was at man's estate; but such was his love for his father, and his reverence for his judgment, that he left the settlement of his future, and the management of his worldly affairs, to the wisdom and care of that surviving parent. You know how the father sent his tried and pious servant into Mesopotamia, in search of a wife for Isaac: how that devout Eliezer knelt by

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the well-side, and in earnest prayer invoked the interposition and guidance of Heaven; how Rebekah, beautiful, and young, and energetic, and kind, was chosen: how she was introduced to Isaac, who had gone out into the fields to meditate at eventide; how they were united in wedlock, and how it is written, "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." The interval between that dear parent's demise and Isaac's marriage was three years. Such was the fondness he entertained for his mother that throughout that period he cherished all those mournful and tender regrets which would naturally spring up in the bosom of one characterised by such devoted filial affection. Not till three years after the mother's burial do we read of Isaac being "comforted," and then not till Providence had provided another to take the place in his thoughts and affections which that lamented parent had occupied. The transition from a dutiful and affectionate son to a kind and indulgent husband is natural and easy. And it may be well remarked, in passing, that one of the first and best recommendations to any young man in settling in life is that he has been, and is respectful, loving, and obedient to his parents. If I were advising any young woman meditating the propriety of accepting a marriage offer, I should say on no account encourage the attentions of a young man who speaks contemptuously of his parents, or acts toward them with evident disrespect. If you marry him the day will come when he will treat you the same as he treats the first and nearest relative of life, and many a heart-ache will be in store for you.

Now, take these instances, together with the entire tenor of Isaac's life, and you cannot fail to see how beautiful was his filial obedience. With his parents he dwelt contentedly and obediently at home till he had attained the age of manhood. To his father's requests he willingly submitted. To a most painful death he was ready to surrender because his father desired him so to do. Fondly loving his mother, he mourned for her three years. Then, confiding in his father, he left the arrangement of his whole career, and the marriage relationship of his life, in his hands; and even after his union with Rebekah, so long as his father lived, his father's will was his. No young man in the Scriptures stands forth as a brighter example of filial tenderness and submission. His life reproves the forwardness and self-sufficiency of so many young men of the present day. Between him and them a great gulf seems fixed. Isaac and the young man of modern times are as distant as the poles. Let me sketch one, who shall stand as a specimen of the rest; but let me express the hope that none of my dear brethren present in any way answer to the portrayal. Yonder is a youth passing from boyhood to manhood. He assumes airs which older and wiser men can easily detect as the certain indications of his emptiness and ignorance. He speaks of respected and experienced men in terms of derision. He treats his superiors in age, intelligence, wealth, and influence as if they were mere dross. He listens not to the wise counsels of his friends, for he is vain enough to think he knows as well or better than any of them. He is desirous, though not out of his teens, to be thought independent. He is impatient of restraint, and expects to be allowed a latch-key, to enter his father's

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house at what hour of the night he may please. He rebels at the advice of parents. He avows that all their talk to him is the offspring of most unreasonable anxiety, or of unfounded mistrust. The more earnestly the loving parents press their views upon his attention the more resolutely he resists. Away from home he speaks of that fond mother as the "old woman," and that faithful father as the "old man," or the "old governor." He presently breaks away from the domestic hearth, and thinks to live untrammelled by parental watchful-Away from home, he seldom cares to write. A letter is a signal to the parents that he is wanting cash. Intimation of a parent's illness makes but slight impression on his mind. He cares not whether his course of life gives pain or pleasure to her who had his first infant kiss. He has no wish to relieve the anxiety of his beloved parents; and if the tidings of their death were conveyed to him, his first question would be, "What is bequeathed to me?" Alas! poor young man, he little knows what joys he is losing, and what a harvest of lamentations awaits him.

Now you do not, you cannot surely, admire such a character. You cannot wish such to be your portrait. But it is the true likeness drawn from life of not a few young men of the present day. My dear brethren, I set Isaac before you as a pattern, and beseech you to cultivate what is so conspicuous in his life—filial affection and obedience. Depend upon it, nothing is more beautiful in the character of a man than the tender and dutiful remembrance of father and mother. Next to the love of God should come the love of one's first and dearest friends. Solomon would have been a far better ruler, and a much happier man, had he heeded the

advice given him by his mother, as recorded in the last chapter of the book of Proverbs. The first commandment with promise is this—"Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." And the noblest man that ever lived—the God-man—in whom there was discoverable no flaw or feebleness, was subject unto his mother and reputed father. I commend to you the words of the wise man—"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother;" "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old."

Gratitude to them should induce your filial obedience. Remember how they cared for you when none others would: how anxiously, night and day, they watched your health, and prayed for your preservation; remember to what inconveniences and discomforts they put themselves to secure you a good education; how unrepiningly they expended of their limited means for your advantage; how affectionately they parted from you when you left home, and how warmly they welcomed you when you returned. Just seriously call to remembrance all their kindness to you, and surely gratitude will suggest ever doing your utmost to serve and please Sometimes you may think that they are unthem. necessarily anxious about you, and that they too often chide or caution you. Well, grant for a moment that their weakness does occasionally so betray itself; it is not a weakness to be despised. They have seen more of life than you. They have seen other sons as steady, as shrewd, as clever as you, make lamentable shipwreck. They have witnessed youths enter life, with less of selfconfidence than you possess, fall from virtue's path into

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lamentable disgrace. Do not then despise their cautions, but rather be grateful for them, and aim to remove their fears by affectionately heeding their counsels and faithfully following them.

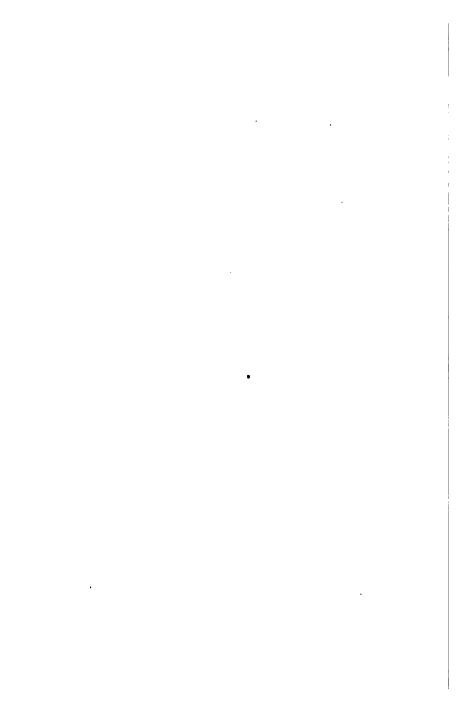
Some of you young men are far from home. scene of your childhood is away—away in the country. You do not forget the hour when first you left those dear parents. You can see that father now as he grasped your hand in his, and with the other hand upon your shoulder, with faltering voice bade you "Fare-You feel still the warm tears of that dear well." mother upon your cheek, as she gave you her parting kiss, and whispered her final words of entreaty. Then, when, with a choking sensation in your throat, you turned away, did you think it possible that you would ever say or do anything that would give pain to those fond parents? Did you not leave them with a determination to please them, and so reward them for their love? Was not then your highest ambition to gratify their hopes and expectations? And now you have been months or years in this metropolis, do the same feelings possess you? If not, do you not think it would be better for you if those fresh, those pure, those early, those beautiful feelings remained in their full force? Oh! my brothers, you may have grown wiser and more manly-you may have outgrown much of your childish simplicity and boyish wonder-but shame, shame upon you if you have grown out of your love, attention, and respect to your parents!

Some of you have lost one, or both, of those dear ones. They have gone to the land of unrevealed mysteries, and you no longer have their kind and anxious counsels. To you I say, let reverence for their memory lead

you to pursue the course you know would gratify them were they still living. Act and speak as though they were watching and hearing all—as indeed they may be. When the great composer Mendelssohn lost his father, he wrote with deep feeling of his irreparable loss and then said, "I shall now work with double zeal at the completion of 'St. Paul,' for my father urged me to it in the very last letter he wrote to me; and he looked forward very impatiently to the completion of my work. I feel as if I must exert all my energies to finish it, and make it as good as possible, and then think that he takes an interest in it." That was a noble feature in the musical professor's character. More of that spirit you will do well to cultivate.

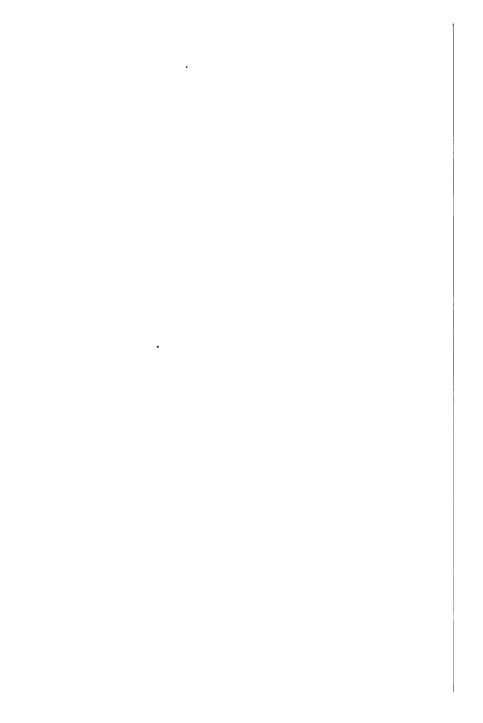
A father, when dying, summoned to his bedside three youths who had grown up together as brothers of one family, and said, "One of you is my son and to him I leave all my property." After the good man's death, a dispute arose as to which of the three was intended, and to settle the question it was brought before a magistrate. The body of the father was disinterred, and the magistrate ordered each of the three disputants to shoot an arrow at the dead man's heart. Two of them at once did so. But the third indignantly refused, saying, "I cannot shoot an arrow at my father's heart." This last was judged to have made a clear title to the property, and inherited all. Young man! whether your parents be living or dead, go you out into life with this firm determination, "I will not-cannot-shoot an arrow at my parent's heart!" In order that such a resolution may be formed and kept, come at once to the Father of spirits—the Father who is in heaven—and cry to Him, "My Father, Thou art the guide of my

youth!" Think much of Jesus—that peerless pattern to young men—who whilst a young man subjected Himself to the agonies of the garden and the cross, because it was His Father's will. Trust in Him, love Him, imitate Him, and there will be no lack of filial obedience and affection in your life.



LECTURE III.

JOSEPH; OR THE REWARD OF CONQUERING TEMPTATION.



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JOSEPH; OR THE REWARD OF CONQUERING TEMPTATION.

TERY beautiful is the history of Joseph. With it all of us from early years have been more or less familiar. The inspired historian has recorded such thrilling incidents, with such striking gracefulness and simplicity, that we cannot fail to be enchanted by the narrative. As we first see the vile plot cunningly laid for the young man's ruin—then trace the unfolding of the deep scheme. the disclosure of the hidden truth, and the triumph of noble virtue—we feel that the history has all the attractions of the finest drama ever penned. The child of a few months and the veteran of threescore years—the unlettered rustic and the literati of renown—the believer in revelation and the avowed infidel, have turned with gratification to this story, and derived instruction, delight, and edification therefrom. They have discovered in it the exquisite and eloquent treatment of uncommon and important events, in such a manner as to convey to the reader's mind the sublimest lessons of morality and religion.

From the very first time we meet with Joseph in the Holy Book we become unusually interested in his career.

We think of him as the long expected son of the beauteous Rachel—as one who had known the bitterness of losing his loved mother—as the special object of his father's affection—and as a youth of seventeen years of age. Not designed for a life of indolence, he was engaged in tending the flocks, and was in this calling associated with "the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives." These were far from being suitable companions for the youth. Their lives were not calculated to improve his moral or spiritual He saw and heard, in these youthful associates, what wounded his spirit; and instead of yielding to the influence of their bad example, he thus early in life resisted temptation, and could not remain at rest until he had disclosed all the particulars of his brethren's evil career to his father. Though we cannot justify a child often reporting to the parent every trivial matter which is to the disadvantage of his brethren or sisters, yet there are occasions when it is noble and praiseworthy not to conceal from father or mother the misdeeds of the other members of the family circle. This was such a special occasion; and for his frank disclosure Joseph deserves our commendation.

As may be expected, however, this only increased the feeling of jealousy which had already begun to work in the breasts of his brethren. Then the dreams which he narrated of his brothers "sheaves" bowing to his sheaf, and of the "sun, moon, and eleven stars" making obeisance to him, were fuel to the fires of ill-will. An opportunity only was wanted, and that unholy passion would evince itself in painful fruits. That opportunity came when the sons of the old patriarch had travelled far from home in attendance on their flocks, and when

Jacob decided to send Joseph in search of them. Ah! how blind is man to futurity! How little any one knows when he bids "farewell" to those at home, and crosses the threshold of the house, whether he will ever Jacob did not think that he was disagain return. patching his loved son from that home for ever; and Joseph little imagined that so many years would elapse before he should look again on that loved and familiar face. The youth set out, and reached Dothan. There he found his brethren. With a heart fluttering with joy, after all his wanderings, and with a countenance flushed with delight at being again among his own kindred, he delivered his father's message and made kind inquiries into their circumstances. But they revolved thoughts of blood, and met him with averted looks and words of hatred. First they decided to murder Joseph; then, changing their plans, they stripped him of his coat of many colours, and cast him into a pit, there to perish with hunger. Soon afterwards, however, there passed a travelling caravan of Ishmaelitish merchants, who were on their way to Egypt with spices and balm. One of the brethren saw at once an opportunity of ridding themselves of the hated Joseph by selling him as a slave to these Ishmaelites; thus, on the one hand, escaping the charge of murder, and on the other realising gain by the transaction. For twenty pieces of silver they parted with Joseph, who was carried away into Egypt. There he was purchased by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard-and never did master obtain a more faithful, trustworthy, and conscientious servant. Being faithful over a few things he was soon made ruler over many things. His virtues were so conspicuous, his bearing so noble, and his services so valuable, that Potiphar made him overseer of his house, and custodian of all his possessions. Thus, though away from the parental roof, he was not less under the shadow of the outstretched wing of Divine protection.

But now came the greatest trial of his life—a trial doubtless permitted by Him who knows how much and how long His people can endure—and who designs by every crucial event in life to prepare man for a nobler future, and gain, through man, fresh glory to His holy name. From a quarter Joseph little expected, there swept down upon him a hurricane of temptation which would have wrecked hundreds of young men, of his age, without his piety. It was the manly, courageous, unswerving, determinate, and heroic manner in which he resisted that temptation that has made Joseph a model to young men, and has rendered his whole career so pregnant with lessons of honour, integrity, purity, and piety.

The wife of Potiphar was an unprincipled and evildisposed woman. She had lost that most precious jewel in the coronet of womanhood—chastity; she had cast aside the charm and glory of her sex—modesty; she had surrendered her mind to the demon vice, and she was ready with the most shameless effrontery to say or do aught that the evil one might suggest. Alas! for the man who has much to do with such a woman!

"Oh! what is woman? What her smile?
Her lip of love, her eye of light?
What is she if her lips revile
The lowly Jesus? Love may write
The stamp upon her marble brow,
And linger in her locks of jet;

The bright spring flowers may scarcely bow Beneath her feet, and yet, and yet— Without that meeker grace she'll be A lighter thing than vanity!"

But if "lighter than vanity" when without religion, oh! what is she when without virtue of life and modesty of manner? What? Why, a walking pestilence, a heartless destroyer, a social vampire. This wife of Potiphar was such. By wanton looks and gestures she signified too plainly the criminality of her intentions. Joseph could not fail to understand her wishes, but he retained his integrity. Then when, abandoning all sense of decency, she expressed in words what she had conveyed by deeds, Joseph spake out most royally. He not only deliberately refused, but he gave his reasons for refusal. First he referred to the responsibility of his position, and clearly intimated that his obligations were proportioned to the trust Potiphar had reposed in him. he alluded to the kindness of his master, who had withheld nothing from him, and suggested that he could not betray kindness so unbounded. And then lastly, as the culminating, closing, and most convincing reason of all -a reason which by its being given last would be most likely to linger in force in the woman's mind—he told of his relationship to God. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" To yield to her invitation, he showed, would be not only treachery to his earthly master, but wilful iniquity in the sight of the Eternal Judge. His argument was this: If honour demands fidelity to my master, piety, which is superior to honour, demands fidelity to God; if the respect due to Potiphar should lead me to say unhesitatingly "No," much more should the reverence due to the Infinite Father make that "No" unfaltering and firm. He did not allow himself to think of the "pleasures of sin for a season "-he did not spend a moment, as Eve did when she fell, in thinking of the agreeableness of the forbidden fruit. Had he done so, then, like many a young man, he would in all probability have fallen. But he directed his thoughts to the other side of the matter-to the obligations he was under to God and man, and the solemn and enduring price he must pay for a transitory Hence he felt it to be impossible to sink to an act of such ingratitude, injustice, and iniquity.

Because he thus so nobly refused the solicitations of that wicked woman, she resolved on his ruin. With fiendish revenge she forged a base lie concerning Joseph. Potiphar was deceived thereby, and drawn unwittingly into the snare laid for him. Believing his false wife, rather than his trusted and faithful servant, Joseph was cast into prison—and what a prison! was what is literally termed a "roundhouse." greater part of it was subterranean, the roof or vault, rising a little above the surface of the ground, was "shaped like an inverted bowl." It is called a dungeon in the 14th verse of the 41st chapter of Genesis. There, bound within those dreary walls, in a strange land, far from home, far from friends, with none to sympathise with him or intercede for him, lies that exemplary youth, that trustworthy steward, that chivalrous servant, a youth of untarnished purity and heroic piety, the heir of a glorious promise, the future lord of Egypt. Is this the reward of virtue? Is this the recompense a man receives for resisting temptation? Nay, wait my brother, till the tale is told. Judge not the Lord by a partial view of His grand and gracious plans. Be not in undue haste to

pronounce upon the effects of integrity and the fruits of self-denial. If you will shut out from your consideration the rewards of another world, do not decline to judge of the results of a man's conduct by the subsequent years of life on earth. Dark was the hour when Joseph was incarcerated, but it was the prelude to the dawn of an effulgent day in his history. He might have said, "All these things are against me!" but the inspired scribe says, "The Lord was with Joseph." That Divine Being who rescued him from the pit followed him to prison. Better far than the sympathy of father or the company of friend was the gracious, comforting, and sustaining presence of his God. The smile of Deity makes our heaven; the frown of the Infinite Father is The limbs of Joseph may have been a very hell. manacled, and the body confined to a solitary dungeon: yet his soul was free, free as the air of heaven, free as the mountain spring, free as the birds of the forest, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."

He had also the approbation of conscience. He knew he was not thrown into prison for any crime which he had wrought. He knew that he was called for a time to suffer for the right—for truth, for virtue, and for God; and, knowing this, the gloom of his cell would be dispelled. Yes, happy under any circumstances is the man whose conscience does not condemn him; but unutterably miserable is he, however free and favoured by the world, who is compelled continually to listen to the whispers of a remorseful conscience. There is many a young man associating with his relatives and friends who would willingly exchange places with Joseph, if he could but rid himself of the intolerable anguish of a wounded spirit. Perhaps I am addressing one who seeks to appear happy,

whilst life is martyrdom, for like Laocoon, night and day he is being stung by the serpents which lodge in his bosom. He sees eyes glaring at him, fingers pointing to him, and voices calling aloud, "Thou hast murdered virtue; thou hast deliberately sinned against God!" Oh, brothers, it is better, infinitely better, to resist temptation, be it ever so fascinating, and retain a conscience void of offence, than sin ever so secretly and securely, so far as man is concerned, and be compelled evermore to feel remorse scourging you as with scorpions.

Then, moreover, Joseph soon obtained the respect and confidence of those about him. "The Lord gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, and the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hands all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it," or it was under his Here, again, was the accudirection and authority. mulating reward of virtue. The members of the circle in which he was called to move held him in reverence. They looked upon him as their superior, their head, and leader. So depend upon it, dear sirs, integrity of conduct will always, and in every place, bring with it the esteem, the honour, and the confidence of those about you. a young man be unwaveringly honest, and sober, and virtuous, and he will never have to lament the want of persons to befriend him and rely upon him. itself is open to the good man. He may "win the spurs of spiritual knighthood" anywhere. He may secure the lordly distinction and influence of a moral monarch by doing always the right. Ay, and the humblest artisan, the poorest peasant shall find the way to honour in this holy chivalry as clear to him as to the scion of a noble house.

But the most manifest reward was that which came to him after he had been imprisoned about three years. You know the particulars of that portion of his lifehow Pharaoh's butler and baker were committed to the same prison, and put under the care of Joseph; how they dreamed and found in Joseph an inspired interpreter; how two years after the butler's return to his monarch's service his master had a vision: how the butler introduced the name of the imprisoned Joseph as skilled in interpretation: how he was summoned into the royal presence, and how he unfolded to Pharaoh the meaning and import concerning the years of famine; how the words of Joseph commended themselves to the judgment of the king; and how he at once directed the exaltation of the prisoner to the highest post of honour in Egypt. The path which for thirteen years had been through so much darkness, and which had taken him down through the lowly vale of misfortune and imprisonment, now led upward to the sunny heights of renown and power. The dreams which he had when at home with his brethren were no delusion. He reached the position of superiority those dreams symbolised. We see him "in language, in dress, and appearance, a member of the great Egyptian aristocracy, 'binding their princes at his pleasure, and teaching their senators wisdom.'" We see him arrayed in the white linen robes of state, invested with the golden chain, adorned with the royal ring, riding in the second chariot of the state, preceded by Egpytian heralds, and surrounded by an admiring crowd of persons who do homage as he passes. We see him honoured with a new name which signifies "Revealer of Secrets," or "Saviour of the Age," married to a princess, receiving obeisance from

his brethren, welcoming his father into Egypt, and making ample provision for his entire family connection. Aye, more, we see him acknowledged by Heaven as an example to the race of humanity, and his history recorded and preserved to be a thrilling homily on the destiny and dignity of virtue. Yes, the worldly recompense which he received was but the effect of the moral excellency he had cultivated. He had governed his own passions, and hence proved himself adapted to govern men. He had gained the sovereignty over self, and God raised him to the mastery of his fellow-men. The virtue of his youth bore its blessed and bountiful fruits when he was thirty years of agefruits which he was permitted to enjoy until he was 110 years of age; until he had the satisfaction of seeing his posterity of the fourth generation by Ephraim his younger son, and of the third generation by Manasseh his first-born. Thus for thirteen years of care, and slavery, and loneliness, he had eighty years of splendour, usefulness, and prosperity. Instead of being a ruined with a blighted character, a condemning conscience, a disapproving God, and a dark and threatening future because of a short-lived gratification, he had a tranquil heart, the confidence of his fellows, the benediction of the Most High, and long years of uninterrupted prosperity and peace. Such-such was the reward of conquering temptation.

Now, my dear young brethren, I hold forth Joseph for your imitation. You will have—aye, you have—your seasons of temptation. It is said that Hercules had to strangle serpents in his cradle. What may be fabulous of him is truthful of some of you. From your very childhood—from the very moment of your new

birth—you have been called to encounter evil inclinations in your own hearts. Fierce and strong the evil one will sometimes bear down upon you. As the husbandman knows the quality of the soil and the best seed to sow therein, so the enemy of souls knows the temperaments of men and the temptations which are most likely to succeed with them. He will come to you each with a siren voice, and a bewitching form, and alluring promises. But resist him manfully. Do not dally with the tempter, or hesitation will prove your If you place yourself before the devil's target, you need not be surprised if you are wounded by his arrows. If you accompany sin one mile, it will certainly compel you to go twain. Hence, I beg you to restrain the sudden impulses of your spirit, repress the eager emotions of your buoyant nature, keep sentinel over the door of your lips, and lay a firm hand on the bridle of your besetting sin. Many a man has been thrown out of the saddle of consistency by riding with too slack a rein of circumspection. Listen not to the craven voices which would encourage you in guilt. Custom may plead. It is an every day event; Partiality may pronounce the sin too small to be worthy notice; and Compromise may suggest that so small an offence is more than condoned by all the acts of benevolence, honesty, and justice which have characterised your life at other times. Heed them not! But look at the sin-whatever it may be as a sin against a heart-searching, just, and holy God, who will bring every secret thing to "judgment whether good or bad;" look to the future, and remember that the fruit of the present must be shared by you by and bye. Shame, sorrow, death if you yield; dignity, happiness,

and heaven if you triumph. Look to those who have fought the life struggle before you—not so much to those who have suffered defeat, as to those who like Joseph have wrestled and overcome; and then look up to Him who was in all points tried as you are, yet without sin, and seek the strength which he promises to vouchsafe. Satan is an able logician, do not argue with him. Selfish considerations will soon surrender the citadel if they are the only keepers. The strongest weapon is that which religion affords. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" was the sword-stroke that conquered the evil one in the hour of Joseph's trial. Cromwell wore under his garments a coat of mail, whether he was in court, in camp, or in chambers. In a spiritual sense you should take like precaution. Clad in the armour of God you shall be a hero; and no foe shall stand before your colossal courage and triumphant faith.

Thus resisting temptation your reward is certain. You may have to wait for that reward, as Joseph had. Disappointment may for a season dog your steps. You may be vexed to see those who yielded to temptation, and sinned, flourishing in the world, whilst you are overlooked and lonely. But be not moved by such thoughts. The course of virtue must lead to advancement. The good man carries with him the guarantees of success. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." The Sandwich Islanders superstitiously believe that when they slay an enemy in war, the strength and energy of the foe they kill pass into the person of the conqueror. In spiritual conflict this is true. Each successful attack, each victorious blow, nerves the being

for nobler deeds, and prepares for more signal triumphs. The more goodness a man possesses the more power he wields over his fellow-men. Whilst the pledge of the Eternal is on his side, "He will give grace and glory, no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Then what matters it the waiting, though the time be twice as long as that Joseph waited? Is not the season of waiting relieved by the joyous consciousness of innocence? And if in this world the recompense should come late in life, you know that, in the other and better land, the glory and honour will be eternal, the laurels unfailing, and the happiness perennial.

"There are days of silent sorrow
In the seasons of our life;
There are wild, despairing moments,
There are hours of mental strife;
There are times of stony anguish,
When the tears refuse to fall;
But the waiting time, my brothers,
Is the hardest time of all.

"Youth and love are oft impatient,
Seeking things beyond their reach;
And the heart grows sick of hoping
Ere it learns what life can teach;
For before the fruit be gathered
We must see the blossom fall;
But the waiting time, my brothers,
Is the hardest time of all.

"We can bear the heat of conflict,
Though the sudden, crushing blow,
Beating back our gathered forces,
For a moment lays us low;
We may rise again beneath it,
None the weaker for the fall;
And the waiting time, my brothers,
Is the hardest time of all.

"For it wears the eager spirit
As the salt-waves wear the stone,
And the garb of hope grows threadbare,
Till the brightest tints are flown;
Then, amid youth's radiant tresses,
Silent snows begin to fall;
Oh, the waiting time, my brothers,
Is the hardest time of all!

"But at last we learn the lesson
That God knoweth what is best,
For with wisdom cometh patience,
And of patience cometh rest;
Yea, a golden thread is shining
Through the tangled woof of fate,
And our hearts shall thank Him meekly
That He taught us how to wait."

LECTURE IV.

DAVID AND JONATHAN; OR, THE VALUE OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.



LECTURE IV.

DAVID AND JONATHAN; OR, THE VALUE OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

IN a ravine in the frontier hills of Judah were once assembled two opposite ran along the valley, and on one side were encamped the Philistines, and on the other side the Israelites. huge giant, full of savage insolence and fury, and clothed in complete armour, challenged the Israelites. challenge was accepted by a simple youth fresh from the sheepfolds. The combatants met—the one of monster proportions, the other small of stature. one clad from head to feet in an impregnable panoply, the other in his ordinary shepherd's dress. The one with sword and shield, the other with a shepherd's sling and five pebbles from the watercourse. The one with overweening confidence in himself, the other with implicit trust in God. But a few moments elapsed, and the first stone thrown by the agile youth had penetrated the brazen helmet of the Philistine, and the boasting giant fell ingloriously upon the battle plain. The head and the sword of Goliath were preserved as trophies of the contest, for the fall of the champion caused the flight of the entire army. That stirring and surprising deed of valour was the turning-point in the career of David. He was taken at once into the presence of the monarch, and there had an opportunity of telling the story of his life. Near the king was the youthful Jonathan, who listened with excitement and growing admiration to all the shepherd-boy narrated. As he heard more and more from the noble hero, and all delivered with so much modesty, prudence, and piety, the soul of Jonathan grew knit to the soul of David, and "Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The affection of the young prince was reciprocated by the son of Jesse. Each found in the other the constituents of a life-long friendship. There and then they entered into covenant, and, to confirm the compact, Jonathan stripped himself of the princely attire in which he had appeared at Court, and placed it upon the shoulders of David—instead of his staff and sling he gave him a sword and bow; and instead of the shepherd's scrip, a belt or sash. In addition to the love of Jonathan, David won the affection of the people generally, and the confidence of Saul. He was presented to the situation of armour-bearer, and subsequently promoted to be captain over a thousand.

But the rays of the sun of prosperity are scorching at the height to which he had risen. The winds are fierce, the storms are severe, and the paths are slippery at such an altitude. The very fame which David justly acquired begat, in the breast of the monarch, that unhappy jealousy which mingled with and marred all his after-relations to David. He looked upon the youth who had been his deliverer as being his rival. Paroxysms of hatred and rage seized his spirit, and he plotted for the destruction of the young man. But the heart of Jonathan was still true. The dark clouds which covered

the elevated path of Jesse's son did not diminish the affection of the young prince. Contrariwise the adversity which befell David was like the darkness which brings out the stars. The friendship of Jonathan for David was developed amid the trials, and ever and anon most tenderly disclosed.

Saul pressed the marriage of his daughter Michal to David, but it was on such conditions that he expected and hoped would prove fatal to David. The king trusted that in conflict with the Philistines, in order to procure the required number of heads of the enemy, this brave youth would be slain. But David slaughtered the number demanded and won Michal as his wife. This only fed the fires of jealousy in Saul's breast, and he at once gave command that Jonathan or his servants should kill David. Now was the opportunity for true friendship to show itself. Now came a moment when all the sincerity of a man's professions are put to a solemn test. Now was the hour for the nobility of a man's nature to be disclosed, and history records the action of a passionate attachment such as no work of fiction is able to surpass. Jonathan first contrived to communicate with David to inform him of the cruel directions of Saul, and constrained him for a time to conceal himself. Then he entered the presence of the monarch, and, though in danger of incurring his father's displeasure, yet he prudently but earnestly claimed the preservation of his friend. Josephus reports the words of Jonathan to Saul thus: -- "What unjust action, O father, either little or great, hast thou found so exceptionable in David as to induce thee to order us to slay a man who hath been of great advantage to thy own preservation, and of still greater to the punishment of the Philistines? A man who hath delivered the people of the Hebrews from reproach and derision, which they underwent for forty days together, when he alone had courage enough to sustain the challenge of the adversary, and after that he brought as many heads of our enemies as he was appointed to bring, and had, as reward for the same, my sister in marriage; insomuch that his death would be very sorrowful to us, not only on account of his virtue, but on account of the nearness of our Consider these things, and change your mind to a more merciful temper, and do no mischief to a man who, in the first place, hath done us the greatest kindness of preserving thee; for when an evil spirit and demons had seized upon thee, he cast them out and procured rest for thy soul from their incursions; and in the second place, hath avenged us of our enemies; for it is a base thing to forget such benefits." Whether such were the exact words or not, they undoubtedly convey the burden of Jonathan's address to his father; and we can picture the anxious face, the eloquent eye, the tremulous hand, the imploring attitude of the prince as he pleaded the cause of one as dear to him as his own life. Under the influence of that speech the king's wrath was appeased; he promised that David should not be slain. Oh, with what a bounding heart and buoyant step Jonathan rushed to the place of concealment, and broke the tidings to his friend! and with what happy spirits the two, locked in each other's embrace, left the hiding-place and entered the royal chamber! Soon an opportunity occurred for David again to signalise himself in the service of the king and his country. This awoke the malicious feelings of Saul, and three times David narrowly escaped the king's

vengeance. The last time, finding that Saul was in a trance, David left Naioth, whither he had taken refuge. and hastened to the palace to confer with Jonathan respecting his future movements. David expressed his conviction that Saul's mind was firmly set upon his destruction, and he intimated to Jonathan his intention to flee to a distant place to pass his days in safety. But Jonathan clung to David to the last. He was a friend who loved at all times. His affection was such that many waters of distress and lamentation could not quench it. Hence he arranged for David to hide by the cairn of Ezel till he had ascertained the precise state of his father's mind. The part Jonathan undertook to play was full of danger, but true love to his friend carried him through it. Whilst excusing David's absence from the Royal table, his father's anger was kindled against him, and he attempted to slay him. Jonathan hastily left the room, and Josephus says, "Being unable to admit anything into his mouth for grief, he wept all night, both because he had himself been near destruction, and because the death of David was determined." Then, next morning, lamenting the ungovernable fury of his father, but ready to encounterany risks for his friend, Jonathan took his bow, and, with the pretence of engaging in his familiar sport of archery, went forth to the appointed field to give signs. to his beloved but persecuted friend lying in ambush. Did the little lad who accompanied the prince observe any difference in his archery exercise that morning? Surely the arrow was not drawn with that care, and strength, and precision it was usually done. Surely there was an anxiety sitting on that countenance, and an apparent absence of mind marking Jonathan's con-

duct which the boy had never noticed before. Surely, too, the practice was of shorter duration than usual, and the lad was despatched with bow and arrows earlier that morning than on any previous occasion. the lad knew not anything, only Jonathan and David knew the matter." And when the boy had retired from the field, the two friends met-met with untold emotion and streaming tears-met for one of those terrible moments, into which an eternity of sorrow seems compressed. You know what it is to clasp hands for the last time; to look long and lingeringly at the face you may never see again; to press that form to your heart with passionate grief, and then at last with quivering lips to falter out, "Farewell!" You know something of the inward pangs of hearts that are sundered. have felt what it is to watch with wistful but wet eyes the receding form of one who has bade "Adieu!" to you and all your surroundings. Then you can appreciate that sad separation of David and Jonathan. Amid keen expressions of grief, they both swore fidelity till death, and then parted with heavy hearts.

Time passed on, full of cares and changes for David. Hither and thither he wandered, and very chequered was his experience. Often, doubtless, did his mind revert to the pleasant hours he spent with Jonathan, and frequent were the prayers he presented for his absent but attached friend. One glimpse of Jonathan was again permitted him. When he was in the wilderness of Ziph, Jonathan found him under the shade of the forest, and comforted his heart. There again they secretly covenanted with each other before God, and parted for the last time. Never again did the two fond spirits meet in this world. But when the tidings of the

death of Jonathan, who, with Saul, fell in the fatal battle of Gilboa, reached David, he mourned, and wept, and fasted, and said, "Oh, Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Ah, the sorrow which had long struggled in his heart and had sometimes trembled on his lip, then expressed itself freely! As he should see the face and hear the voice of Jonathan no more, the memory of all the past rushed upon him, and he felt that friendship was a word too feeble to express his deep attachment. Nothing less than brotherhood will do, and he cries, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan."

The loss of his dear friend was not the signal for the decay of David's attachment. The covenant he made with Jonathan he was anxious to observe. Hence many years afterwards, when David was firmly settled in his kingdom, he caused inquiry to be instituted whether any of the family of Jonathan survived, to whom he might show kindness for the father's sake. He thus heard of Mephibosheth, who till then had grown up in quiet obscurity. He immediately sent for him to Jerusalem. gave him a place at his own table, as though he were a member of the royal family, bestowed upon him extensive landed property, which enabled him to support an establishment suited to his position, and gave him Ziba, an old steward of Saul's house, to manage the property for him. Thus the friendship of David outlived the removal of Jonathan, and proved itself fit to requite him whose love was more than that of women.

Very simple, very suggestive, and very beautiful is the entire history of David and Jonathan, at which we have thus so briefly glanced. Here, in this inspired book, the narrative lies, to tell the false, cold, inconstant world that such a thing as true friendship has existed. Here it lies, suggesting the fact that a man may have many admirers, many acquaintances, many co-workers, many servants, but only a few, perhaps only one true friend. Here it lies, teaching us what friendship is, on what it is established, amid what surroundings it is fostered, and what it is prepared to endure. My dear young brethren, in setting out in life get, as speedily as you can, right ideas of friendship. Be prepared to find that

"Most friendship is feigning; most loving mere folly."

Be prepared to encounter many who will speak of you as their "friend," who are devoid of a single trait of sterling character. Be prepared to come in contact with men and women whose eyes brighten, and whose whole countenances become radiant with apparent delight at meeting you, who all the while have hearts like an iceberg, and only wear the fashionable semblance of friendship. Be prepared to discover that many who. under pretence of profound interest in your welfare. will draw from you all your secrets, only prove, like the shadow on a sun-dial, attendants on your sunshine. But, whilst on your guard against such insincerity, do not doubt the existence of true friendship. Like jewels, real friends are rare, but they are to be found. When found. a true friend is one of the grandest boons the Infinite can bestow. I am anxious to guide you in your search for such a blessing, by pointing out certain marked features of true friendship which are discoverable in the narrative of David and Jonathan.

Observe, then, that friendship is based on true love. Concord of sentiment is not enough; agreement of taste is not enough; unity of purpose is not enough; frequent or constant companionship is not enough. These may exist between one man and another without the binding together of their hearts; and these may be absent where true friendship exists. One man's judgment, and taste, and pursuits may be the very antipodes of another, and yet these two men may be one in heart. Ay, their very differences may intensify their friendship. Their variances may be only like an occasional discordant note in music, bringing out the fine harmony of the entire composition. Love is the essential element of true friendship. Love is the root from which it grows. Love is the strong bond which must interlace the affections, and join soul to soul. Without that self-forgetful, all-surrendering passion every profession of cordiality and friendship is as uncertain as the wind, and as unstable as the sand. That hallowed principle which led our Lord Jesus to His great sacrifice must be cherished between friends. The idea of sacrifice is involved in friendship, and sacrifice is in the very nature of love. The extent to which a man is ready to suffer for his fellow-man is the measure of his love, the limit of his friendship. Depend upon it, if there be no willinghood to make any sacrifice for your weal, there is no true friendship. Jonathan was ready to encounter his father's displeasure, to expose his own life to danger, ay, to see the crown pass away to David, because his heart was knit to David. On the other hand, the son of Jesse was willing to face the Philistines, to forego the pleasures of the palace, to taste the bitterness of a wanderer's life, and years afterwards to divide some of his possessions for the benefit of his friend's son, because he loved Jonathan. Young man, stand in doubt of that companion's sincerity, whatever his protestations, who is not prepared to make some sacrifice when occasion calls for it, and his friendship for you, if real, would dictate it.

Friendship is reciprocal in its growth and preservation It is a giving and taking. It is not, cannot be, a one-sided thing. Seneca truly said, "Love if you wish to be loved," and a wiser than the philosophic tutor of Nero, even Solomon, said, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Mutual confidence must be fostered, mutual interest in each other's welfare must be evinced, mutual jealousy for each other's reputation must be cultivated. An old Greek poet says:—

"If it only were right, how delightful 'twould be, To open the breast of a friend, And peep at his heart, and replace it again, And believe in him then without end."

But it is not "right," and it is not practicable, and true friendship will not desire it. The atmosphere of suspicion or distrust is fatal to all friendship. It is a "killing frost that nips its roots." The form of the sheltering tree may continue, but the life is defunct. If the trust of the one is not responded to by fidelity in the other; if the frankness of the one is met only by reserve in the other; if the purposes of the one are privately disclosed to be only secretly undermined by the other, alienation and not union of heart must be the result. Mutual offices must be discharged, and alternate acts of kindness displayed to retain and develop friend-

ship. Richter beautifully puts it, "Every friend is to the other a sun, and a sunflower also. He attracts and follows." Such was the friendship between David and Jonathan. There was a reciprocity between them. There was no cold shade of suspicion lingering about the mind of either. So let it be, my brother, with all the friendships you form.

True friendship strengthens in trial. There is nothing that tests all the attachments we form in life, like adversity. In the summer of our prosperity, when our barns are filled with plenty, our trees are laden with fruit, and our parterres look gay with choice flowers, there is no difficulty in finding companions to while away with us the pleasant hours. But when the winter wind wails its threnody over the remains of the departed season, when sharp sorrows crowd the present, and threatening losses darken the future, when our sky is overcast with gloom, and we have no fruits—no flowers to offer, then too generally we are left alone to spend the long days in tearful soliloquies. Hence Goldsmith, in his "Hermit," speaks of friendship as being—

"But a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep,
A shade that follows wealth or fame;
And leaves the wretch to weep."

But Solomon says, "A friend loveth at all times." He follows us with sympathy through all our wanderings. He bends over us, in tearful tenderness, even in our delinquencies. He will not give us up whilst there is aught to be hoped for. Though he is precious to us in seasons of peace and plenty, he is doubly so when the crisis of necessity comes. It is then,

when we are deceived in the world's promises, and depressed by life's woes, that the warm heart, and strong hand, and cheering voice of a friend are of increased value. Not without its advantages in this respect is the season of misfortune. It proves who are friends, and who are only acquaintances; who may be confided in, and who must be treated with vigilant care. As the wind which shakes the fruit trees of your garden in spring shakes off the unsound fruit, so adversity separates from us many who, though they appeared to be lovingly and vitally attached to us, were only retaining their connection by some secondary, nonessential tie. He is a friend who will go with us when we toil up the hill Difficulty, and will stand with manly courage by our side when the deadly arrows of undeserved opposition are falling fast around us. That is friendship which, like a shadow, accompanies us all our way, and deepens and lengthens when the sun of success Such was the friendship between David and is setting. How faithfully the young prince clung to Jonathan. David when in his deepest trial, and how glad was he to have but a brief interview with his old friend in the forest, without divulging to any one the place of his friend's concealment! The ancients represented friendship as a fair young man, bearing on his raiment the inscription. "With you in life and death." On his forehead were the words "Summer and Winter." breast was open so that his heart could be seen, and with one finger he pointed to two words engraved on the heart—"Far, Near." My brothers, see to it that the picture fairly represents the friendship which you cultivate. Do not forsake your friend when fortune frowns upon him; and, on the other hand, do not value

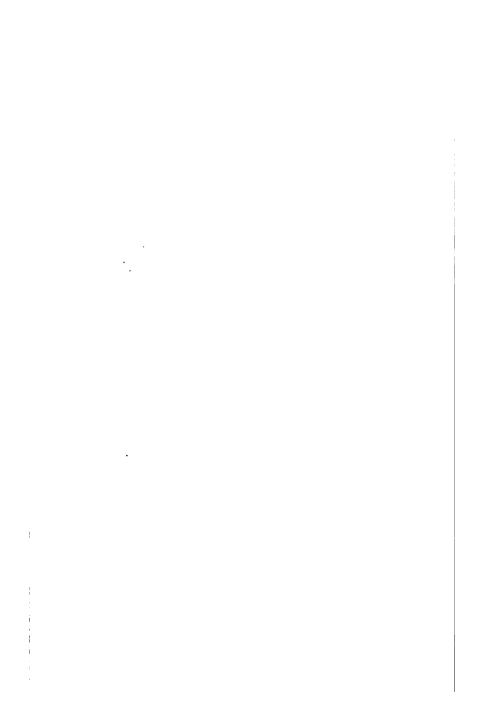
very highly the professed attachment of one who ceases his attentions when loss or sorrow becomes your lot.

True friendship is unbroken by death. Jonathan lingered in the heart of David years after he had passed away from earth, and that love led the roval bard to show kindness to Jonathan's son. less, David felt concerning his departed friend, what he expressed in relation to his child, "I shall go to him, though he shall not return to me." He did not recognise the King of Terrors as interrupting or dissolving the endearing tie which existed. So, dear sirs, we should try to remember that death, instead of sundering the bonds which unite soul to soul, more generally strengthens them. The outward expressions of friendship may be abolished, but the inner principle is consolidated and confirmed. The errors, failings, and singularities that were unwelcome, are removed from our view; but the excellencies are rendered more conspicuous, and so more memorable. It is our privilege to think of those friends, who have died in the Lord, as still existing in a condition of blissful purity. We feel they are gone from our gaze, as they who have' passed the sea, and become permanent residents of another country. But we feel also that there is a point where our sympathies and affections still blend. Now and then we have looked at the silvery moon, when hills and vales have separated us from those we love, and thought that upon that very same object possibly their eyes and ours were resting at that very moment. So, only with intensified feelings and absolute certainty, may we realise that the throne of grace is the meeting place of friends whom death hath physically divided. They gather round the throne of the Eternal, and we,

when we pray, come to the footstool of that throne. They are engaged in the beatific vision of the Holy Presence; and we, when we lift our spirits in devotion, look to Him. Thus the hearts of friends, though some may be on earth, and others in heaven, can and do blend at the throne of God. You go forth to the grassgrown grave, or marble monument, which marks the resting-place of some departed friend, and you say, "There lies one who was very dear to me-one who did more to make my life happy, honourable, and useful than all beside!" But why should your thoughts thus gravitate earthward? Why should your soul thus cleave to the dust? Look up! Mount on the wings of faith and affection to the better land. Your friend is not dead. Living, thinking, feeling, and remembering, he is still your friend. Probably he is now more or less acquainted with all your proceedings, and interested in all that interests you. Oh, brothers, this should elevate our ideas of friendship. It should raise the temperature of our affections for those to whom we are sincerely attached; for friendship formed on earth between two or more lovers of Jesus, shall be perpetuated in the undying ages of a deathless world. David and Jonathan "were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

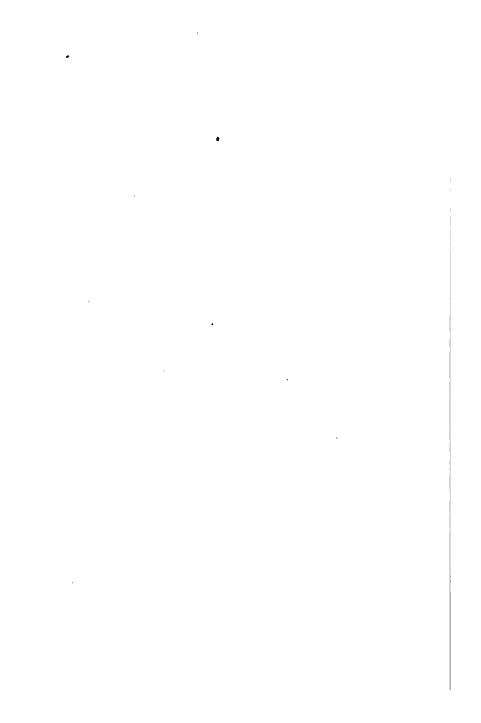
But I cannot close this lecture without asking you whether you are friends of Christ. Is there any true bond of affection between your soul and Jesus? Christ has many professed followers, many admirers, many servants, but He has comparatively few friends. If He spoke to you now would He say, "I call you not servants, but friends"? If He were visibly to stand before you would you be able, in all sincerity, to throw

yourself in grateful adoration at His feet, and say, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend"? Whatever acquaintances you neglect to make, do not fail to "acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace!" Whatever companions you slight, do not treat that loving, sympathising, interceding Saviour with indifference! Whatever love-links you may break, oh! do not sunder the sweet and saving bonds which faith forms between the soul and Christ! He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and One who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!



LECTURE V.

ABSALOM; OR, THE PENALTY OF VICE.



LECTURE V.

ABSALOM; OR, THE PENALTY OF VICE.

SOLEMN responsibility rests upon parents. Not a little of the sinfulness of children may be traced to the foolish indulgence displayed toward them by father and mother. When faults are allowed to pass in silence, and excesses are permitted without the exercise of restraint, who can wonder that the child grows in the love of sin, and in the habitual tendency to evil? Such unwise treatment of the young results generally in a harvest of terrible sorrow for both parents and children. Thus was it with David and Absalom. David culpably neglected his children, and most injudiciously indulged them. Of Adonijah it is said that "his father had not at any time displeased him, saying, Why hast thou done And toward Absalom there was manifestly cherished a weak and unhealthy favouritism. loss of David's moral strength may be attributed to his own past guilt. When Nathan, years before, rebuked David for his sin, he predicted the punishment in the words, "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah, the Hittite, to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." It was even so.

effects of that fatal fall followed him like a dark shadow. Though the sin was pardoned by a merciful God, yet the bitter burning fruits continued. How could he speak with an unfaltering voice against the vice which he had so wilfully committed? His reproofs and rebukes lost their virtues, their vis, because not enforced by a clear conscience. However earnestly he may address his sons, the knowledge of their father's past sin operated as a secret apology in their hearts for some of the wickedness to which humanity is ever tempted. Hence the lamentable career of the wayward and wicked Absalom.

He was the the third son of David, and inherited the beauty for which the house of Jesse was renowned. It is said that "from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." His hair grew in wonderful profusion, year by year, or month by When cut it was weighed, and the weight Public attention was thus drawn thereof reported. toward him. He was exposed to the admiration and flattery of the multitude, for "in all Israel there was none so much praised as Absalom." Consequently personal vanity was developed in his own heart. early learnt to think more highly of himself than he ought to have thought, and yielded to the dominion of that pride which "goeth before destruction." Accustomed to be pampered at home and applauded abroad, he grew selfish and headstrong. He could not brook restraint and hence he was ready for the most flagrant evils. We are not surprised that he felt profoundly grieved and annoyed at the conduct of his half-brother Ammon in relation to his sister Tamar. He would be a strange man who in such circumstances would not feel every drop of blood tingle in his veins with holy anger.

But Absalom took the wrong steps to punish the of-If the king declined, from fear or weak affection, to mark his disapproval of the sin of Ammon, Absalom might have adopted a different course to avenge his sister's wrong. In his imperious and unbridled spirit he resolved upon the murder of the heir to the throne. To accomplish this crime, he invited the monarch and the princes to a pastoral festival at his country David declined the invitation, but the sons house. accepted. When the guests were in full enjoyment of the viands, the retainers of Absalom, at a preconcerted signal from their master, entered the banqueting room, and slew Ammon as he sat at table. General alarm prevailed. The other princes fled, took their mules, and hastened back to Jerusalem with the melancholy tidings for David. Knowing how deeply the whole family felt the death of Ammon, and the circumstances of that death, Absalom saw it necessary to retire to exile beyond the limits of Palestine. He hastened to his father-in-law's court at Geshur, and there remained three years. At the expiration of that time, through the clever devices and careful management of Joab, Absalom was permitted to return to Jerusalem, and two years subsequently he was reinstated in his social position, and restored to parental care.

But the spirit which had made him a terror to his brethren now began to exhibit itself towards his father. During his long exile, impatient of his disgrace, he became growingly alienated from David, and revolved thoughts of treason. Soon after his return to Jerusalem he commenced the carrying out of the base purpose. He did not hasten at once into open rebellion against his parent, but began by courting popularity. Assum-

ing a semi-regal magnificence he often appeared in public, displaying his chariots and war-horses. He knew the effects upon the populace of such blandishments. particularly as David was just then living a somewhat retired life. To this outward grandeur he added a profession of deep sympathy with all who sought his counsel, and insinuated, when he could, a spirit of disaffection. He hinted at the untold advantages which would be secured to the people if he were monarch, dimly shadowed forth the generous schemes he should execute, and held up his intentions in striking contrast to the reign of his father. Moreover, so basely could he stoop to rise to the throne, that by a counterfeit courtesy and hollow hypocrisy, he kissed all who came near him. Thus, by practising all such popular airs as generally precede and predict sedition, "he stole the hearts of the men of Israel." His next step was more open. Hastening to Hebron, he proclaimed himself king, and was quickly the leader of a very formidable revolt. Receiving tidings of his son's rebellion, David deemed it expedient to flee from Jerusalem across the Jordan, to Mahanaim. Profoundly impressive is the picture presented of the flight of David. He "went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and went barefoot; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went up." Ah! it was a bitter hour for Israel's monarch when thus he was obliged to flee for safety from his own son —the son he had so warmly loved and so unwisely favoured. Very suggestive are the words of the sacred historian, that at the top of the mount David worshipped God.

"Oh! when the heart is full—when bitter thoughts Come crowding thickly up for utterance. And the poor common words of courtesy Are such an empty mockery-how much The bursting heart may pour itself in prayer! He pray'd for Israel—and his voice went up Strongly and fervently. He pray'd for those Whose love had been his shield—and his deep tones Grew tremulous. But oh! for Absalom-For his estranged, misguided Absalom— The proud, bright being, who had burst away In all his princely beauty, to defy The heart that cherished him—for him he pour'd, In agony that would not be controll'd, Strong supplication, and forgave him there, Before his God, for his deep sinfulness."

Hearing that his father had quitted Jerusalem, Absalom proceeded to the metropolis, and took possession of the throne. Then, following the counsel of the aged Ahithophel, he took the most infamous step of publicly and villanously degrading his parent; and to add to the enormity of his guilt he willingly assented to the suggestion that his father should be at once pursued and slain. The advice of Hushai, who counselled delay, was preferred, and thus David had time to collect and properly organise his forces, for he saw that nothing remained but to battle with his reprobate son for the preservation of his kingdom. We stand in imagination by the gates of the once widely-known and well-fortified city of Mahanaim. It is yet early in the morning, but the whole city is astir. The sun is just struggling above the horizon-rising to look down upon a spectacle of heartrending and loathsome strife. The air is fresh, and the breeze is gentle-ah! ere nightfall the breeze

shall kiss the clay-cold corpse of many a valiant son, and bear on its wings the dying wail and the din of war. Hark! there is now the measured tramp of men accustomed to march; and here cometh the king to take up his position by the gate, and review the gallant companies. The whole army is arranged in three divisions, each having its commanding officer. pass the king in disciplined order, and as they pass David has one charge to give to each officer. It costs him much emotion. What is it? "Soldiers be brave?" No. "No quarter, conquer or die?" No. But, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom." Quickening their marching pace, the whole army is lost to sight in the distance, but is followed by the prayers and good wishes of multitudes. The hours steal by very languidly to David, who is still watching by the gate—very speedily to the conflicting hosts. It is now evening, but before the orb of day has quite sunk in the blushing west there are some tidings for the king. The question which has hung in terrible suspense is settled. There hurries into his presence a messenger from the field of strife, to announce the defeat of his But the news of victory is of secondary importance to David till he has been informed of the fate of his son. With fluttering heart and anxious face, he asks, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Another messenger now arrives, conveying the same information. But, as before, the king meets him with the interrogation, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" truth now must be told. The melancholy tidings must be broken in the gentlest terms possible. So Cushi says, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young

man is." Then he is dead! Like a barbed arrow the words of Cushi pierce the heart of David, and he is overmastered with sorrow. Monarch though he is, his grief, like that of all men, thinks not of ceremony. Any place will do to weep in, so that the man is alone. There is a small 'guard-chamber over the gate, and thither he hastens to relieve his pent-up distress in tears. But ere he reaches it he retains control of his emotions no longer, and his agony breaks out in a terrible lamentation. His subjects hear him exclaiming, amid his sobs, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son Absalom!"

In the presence of such agony of heart a stranger finds no place. The sorrow is far too sacred for alien eves and ears. We leave the monarch alone with his God—the God of consolation, and we visit the scene of the battle. It is the "forest of Ephraim." The ground is strewed with the indications of a terrible struggle. There lie twenty thousand bodies of the men who supported Absalom's cause. But where is Absalom? Joab drew the forces of Absalom into the wood, and there in the interlacing thickets the host lost the way, and were easily overpowered. Absalom fled on a swift mule, and in doing so his hair, in which he gloried, caught in the overhanging branch of the great terebinth tree, and he was left in helpless suspense. Joab found him in this condition, and despite David's orders, he pierced Absalom through with three darts. The mangled body was then taken from the tree for burial. Desiring posthumous fame, Absalom had, years before, erected a capacious tomb in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, intending it to be his burial-place. But he never occupied it. A

deep pit was found in the wood, near the tree on which he was suspended, and into that, without any funeral rites, the body of the wretched youth was cast, and then covered by a huge mound of stones. For centuries afterwards it was customary for passers-by to cast a stone upon the heap, saying as they did so, "Cursed be the memory of rebellious Absalom."

Such was the penalty he paid so far as this world is concerned. He forfeited the peace of mind and quietude of life which might have been his portion. He lost the prize of worldly honour and power for which he so He was defeated in the very plans earnestly struggled. which he so carefully devised. He was cut off from life whilst young in years, and by a means most ignominious. He was ambitious to occupy the regal seat of his father, but the terebinth tree was his throne, his tangled hair his crown, the three darts which pierced him were his sceptre, and Joab's ten armour-bearers who witnessed his closing moments formed his guard. Surely it is no wonder that he became the object of lasting execration. Instead of being remembered as a loved and faithful son, he is known to posterity as an ungrateful rebel, an infamous fratricide, an unblushing patron of the grossest Instead of dying at a ripe old age and resting in an honoured grave, he expired in the midst of his days and was consigned to a desolate cairn in the forest. But what shall we say of his soul? The Mussulman legends say that hell vawned beneath his feet at the moment of his miserable death. We read that Augustine doomed him to eternal perdition. Nothing is recorded to lead us for a moment to indulge the hope of his spiritual safety. Not concerning Absalom could the broken-hearted David say, "I shall go to him,

though he shall not return to me." Ah! better had it been for Absalom had he never been born.

"Shame and dishonour sit

By his grave ever;

Blessings shall hallow it—

Never—O never!"

Alas! what a record of sin, and shame, and suffering, and tears is the record of Absalom's career! It is not a pleasureable task to unveil that nature, which you and I share, in its state of impurity, impiety, and utter prostration. It is not a joy to me to tell the tale of a fellow-man's guilt and consequent grief. Rather would I point you, brothers, to men who have closed their ears to the voice of the tempter, and, amid allurements many and mighty, have lived godly, righteous, and sober lives. But I believe this history of Absalom conveys lessons which will be ever applicable to young men, and perhaps never more so than at the present time. One great and solemn thought which it suggests is thisthat an indulgence in vicious habits brings debasement in its train, and ends in the most terrible and tragical That thought I pray you remember, and let it have its due influence with you whenever you are disposed to heed the entreaties of some infatuated companion.

I do not deny that there are some pleasures in sin. The paths of vice would not have so great a number of eager frequenters if there were no gratification discoverable therein. The wayward and wandering spirit finds something congenial to its taste. But how superficial, and short-lived, and unsubstantial are the best of

these pleasures! What a terrible sense of spiritual famine follows! What bitter loathing of the past pursuits is experienced! And what disturbing recollections of neglected opportunities for elevating the life haunt the mind! In addition to which, how frequently there is the total ruin of character, loss of property, sacrifice of health, to be closed up by untimely death! "The way of transgressors is hard," is a text which is daily illustrated by our public journals. The lamentable results of intemperance, lewdness, gambling, trickery, and dishonesty meet us every hour as we pass along the world's highway. We may say of vice in all its forms -" Let not thine heart incline to her ways, go not astray in her paths, for she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her."

A few years since a gentleman from the provinces, in company with a friend, was driven by a storm for shelter to the Mansion House, where the Lord Mayor was then presiding in open court. He was recognised and followed by one whom he did not observe, and next morning the following note was found under the door of his friend's house, addressed to the visitor.

"Dear Sir,—As I was walking up Ludgate Hill this morning, you passed me with your brother-in-law. It is ten years since I left C——; but I knew you instantly, and forward this line to tell you I am glad to see you looking so well, and that the sight of your familiar face induced a number of pleasing reflections in connection with bygone scenes; but of agonising remorse at the maddening recollection that, from the neglect of those principles you endeavoured to inculcate,

with a bad home training, I find myself a young man stripped of fortune, friends, and happiness, and of the hope of the world to come—a mere wreck—a waif on the restless waves of life, that sway to and fro in this desert town! What would I not give to recall the past! 'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,' thunders my conscience constantly. I find it true in temporal affairs as well as spiritual. The next you hear of me will be in the list of those who seek to bury their sorrows in the waters of the Thames. I hope Mrs. M--- is well. Thank her for me for her past kindness. That a coffee-house is my study, is my only excuse for this rude scrawl. I thought these feelings I had smothered for ever, but conscience will be heard despite all. I wilfully silenced her, and now can trace the hand of a retributive Providence in the results of every false step. I saw you again at the Mansion House this afternoon. I hope you will refrain from making any inquiries as to my name, as it would be labour thrown away. All I ask is an interest in your prayers.—I remain, yours gratefully, AN OLD PUPIL."

The gentleman to whom this letter was addressed read it with deep emotion, and at once resolved to advertise for the writer in the *Times*. The morning afterwards a second letter was received by the advertiser, which ran as follows;—

"Dear Sir,—I see "tempus edax rerum" * has not altered your character—ever kind, generous, and anxious to succour the distressed. Accept my best and heartfelt thanks for your kind communication in

^{• &}quot;Time that destroys all things."

to-day's Times, but I regret that you should have been at the trouble and expense of insertion, as it is im-

possible for me to avail myself of it at present.

"The past, the present, and the future equally forbid disclosures of my private history; and yet you are the only person to whom I think I could unbosom myself, or from whom I could seek advice, but not now. Do not waste another thought upon one who is totally unworthy of everything but contempt and derision from all good men. Could I persuade myself that there is no hereafter, how gladly would I seek annihilation; but it is a hopeless task—the instincts of my better part are unfortunately too truthful to be deluded with a lie.

"What an awful reality is life, and what a dream has been mine! Commencing with novel reading, and ending in vice, misery, and disease! Such are a few of the least evils I am now reaping.—I remain, dear sir, yours gratefully, An Old Pupil."

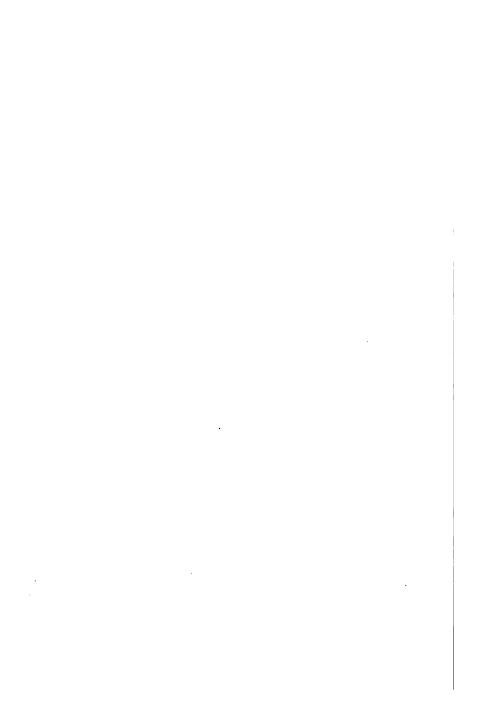
Such a case, over which one's heart bleeds, is but one out of a multitude. Did we know the particulars of hundreds of instances occurring daily in this million-peopled city, in which young men are being ruined body and soul by vice, we should surely think differently of the evils which sometimes we are disposed to palliate. How many a youth who carolled free and happy as a bird beneath the dear recompense of a mother's smile—who gave every promise of adding lustre to his family name, and benefiting the world by his noble talents—who entered London with the rose of health mantling his cheek, the fire of intelligence beaming from his eye, and manly purposes revolving in his heart—has visited the

theatre, felt the intoxication of excitement, joined evil companions, frequented the gambling table, fallen into the snares of her in whose house are the dead, and, as the result, is to-day the possessor of a corrupted, polluted, sin-bound spirit, a degraded prodigal-homeless, friendless, and useless to society. Dear sirs, are the pleasures of sin worth purchasing at such a price? Is not the penalty too heavy for joys so fleeting? Do you not know that there is true happiness of the purest and most permanent order to be obtained without charge? Why will you spend your money "for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." If I address a young man who has been treading the downward paths of vice, let me entreat you, dear friend, to turn to Him who says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become like wool; and though red like crimson they shall be white as snow." There is no hope for you away from Him. You cannot tear off the poisonous Nessus-garment which is eating into your soul. You cannot extract the barbed shaft which has pierced your spirit. You cannot heal the wounds which iniquity has But He can, and will, if you but ask Him. And though the scars of the wounds obtained in the servitude of the devil may remain with you until death, yet freedom from the bondage to hell may be readily obtained through Christ.

But I like to believe that I am addressing young men who have not been overpowered by the fascinations of sin. I like to feel, and I think I have, in most cases, reason to feel, that you are strangers to vice in its grosser and unblushing forms; that you are un-

acquainted with those places of so-called amusement where the devil holds high carnival; that curiosity has not carried you across the threshold of those gailylighted saloons where capital, and character, and comfort are lost at one throw; and that you are not accustomed to poison your minds by those feverish novels which are seasoned by deception, violence, bloodshed, and murder. I want to believe, brothers, that hitherto you have struggled manfully when tempted, and still stand unscathed in your moral character. I want to know that your buoyant spirits have never been the highway for the demons of darkness, and that your future has no shadow cast upon it by any mountain of error in the past. If it be so, I pray God you may be kept ever more—kept true to Him-true to the teachings of an enlightened conscience—true to the obligations which inevitably devolve upon you. Never let the man who is devoid of moral principles lead you to think that gaiety, wildness, licentiousness in youth is an evidence of high promise in the future. Do not be induced to believe that there is a period when every young man must "sow his wild oats," and that they who do not so are dolts devoid of energy and pluck. Such representations are absolutely and abominably untrue. You may find men who were profligate in youth, afterwards becoming conspicuous for their marvellous talents. But it was not by their excesses that they became what they are. On the other hand I can point you to some of the noblest men the world has ever known, who from childhood have lived innocent, virtuous, and beautiful lives. It requires no brains to drink, and gamble, and swear, and lie, and surrender to every sensual pursuit; and the adoption of

such a line of life will never give a man mental or moral stamina. No, young men, it is in the ways of godliness the greatest prizes are won. Priceless possibilities are before the pious youth. Golden opportunities are close at hand, and Divine strength may be procured with which to improve them. Oh, take the Bible as the rule of your life, the foundation of your hope, and the source of your assurance! Take Jesus with you into all the many engagements of life. Look to Him, lean on Him, aim to please Him, and then, whatever may await you, all will be well. Trust not to your own strength, or wisdom, or prudence. That will fail you if alone. Put no reliance on any hopes of God's mercy out They will one day serve you as Absalom's mule did his master when the hour of punishment came -hurry from you and leave you to your helpless, hopeless, unhappy fate. Let your trust be supremely and ever in the One All-sufficient Saviour of sinners.



LECTURE VI.

HEZEKIAH; OR, THE COURAGEOUS DEFENCE OF TRUTH.

THE ancient Greeks called the Supreme Being Zeus, that is, the life-giver, and mythology represented Zeus as being the father of Clio, the muse of history. The pagan mind had thus embraced the truth that the history and life of nations must be traced to the Eternal Ruler—that the records of the rise and fall of places and people are the annals of that Divine government which is over all blessed for evermore. We shall never read history aright until we recognise the hand of God in every page. We shall never fully appreciate the din and confusion of the conflicts portrayed until we see each actor under the constant direction of One presiding mind. When we are prepared to own that the men who suddenly step into the world's arena and unexpectedly reverse the thoughts and impulses of society are raised up by God, and that the events which lead to the ruin of nations, and the erasure of long-famed names from the world's map, are wisely permitted by Heaven-then shall we find every line of historic truth vivified and unspeakably valuable.

Hezekiah was thus raised up to do a noble and a blessed work. There is a Jewish tradition that he applied to himself the prophetic allusions of Isaiah, and the contents of the 20th and 110th Psalms. Hillel is recorded to have said that there would be no Messiah for Israel in future times, because He had already made His appearance in the person of Hezekiah. Without endorsing any such extreme and unscriptural notions of the character and position of Hezekiah, we cannot doubt but that sovereign grace specially wrought within him, and that the overruling Spirit of the Lord made his reign the "culminating point of interest in the history of the Kings of Judah."

Hezekiah was the son of Ahaz, the most corrupt monarch that had hitherto appeared in Judah—a man who, abandoning all the restraints which law and custom had imposed upon the Hebrew kings, followed the leadings of his own depraved imagination, and introduced the idolatrous religion of the Syrians into Jerusalem-a man who despoiled the sacred furniture and vessels of the Temple, and, as if regardless both of God and man, ultimately shut up the Temple and left the interior to neglect and decay. The Supreme Ruler of the Church and of the world saw fit to remove such an evil-doer He died at the early age of thirty-six, from the throne. but not before there was one ready, under Divine tuition, to take his place. Hezekiah was twenty-five years of age when he succeeded his father, and never did a godly young man step up to a position where piety and principle were more severely tested. He began his reign aright. The first month of the first year that he was monarch witnessed the purification and public opening Soon afterwards he revived the Passof the Temple. over, of which no celebration had been recorded since the time of Joshua. The day upon which the Passover should have been observed in the first year of his reign had already passed. So Hezekiah, holding that a late observance on another day would be a less evil than the entire omission for the year, directed that it should be kept on the fourteenth day of the second month, just one month beyond the usual time. Invitations were sent to the ten tribes which formed the neighbouring kingdom, and the matter was published far and near throughout Judah. The attendance was very great, the fervour of the people ran high, so that the festival was prolonged to twice its usual duration. The young king next proceeded to abolish the superstitions which his predecessors had encouraged. The monuments of idolatry were totally destroyed; the brazen serpent, which had been preserved as a memorial of God's goodness, was broken in pieces, and the "high places," or groves, which the kings of former days had spared, were overthrown. Hezekiah, doubtless, knew that such a work of reformation would be a severe shock to the prevailing sentiments of his subjects. Time-honoured associations made those shady groves, those consecrated altars, and that brazen serpent precious in the eyes of the people. abolish these, and confine the attention of the nation to the Temple in Jerusalem was, in the estimation of the multitude, little less than sacrilege. I have no doubt there were many in those days who talked loudly against the doings of the king, and pronounced him an iconoclast. a revolutionist, a destroyer of the national religion, an ultra-secularist. But Hezekiah saw that, though some of the institutions of the Jewish Church were venerable with age, yet they had outlived their usefulness, and were being made subservient to the purposes of idolatry. He saw, too, that, as a vine is not injured, but rendered fruitful by a timely pruning, religion is often developed

by casting off all connection with that which is an in-He was confident that God would take care cumbrance. of His own truth and ever smile on that which is right; and hence he was deaf to the voice of the alarmist. Whoever might oppose, and however widespread the disaffection, he knew truth, and purity, and Divine strength were arrayed on his side. Fearlessly he prosecuted his intentions, and the smile of Heaven rested upon him. Anxious for the extension of simple piety, he made an effort to collect and increase the sacred books. He directed that a large portion of Solomon's proverbs should be written out—the portion from chapter xxv. to chapter xxix. Jewish tradition says he gave commandment for the writing of Isaiah's prophecies, the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the Canticles. revived the services of the Temple, and re-established the perpetual sacrifices, so that once more the offerings of the people maintained the treasury of the Temple.

But now came a season of painful anxiety to Hezekiah and his subjects. The renowned and powerful King of Assyria, Sennacherib, invaded Judea. Surrounded by the Assyrian forces, and feeling at first unable to encounter such a mighty host, Hezekiah made overtures to avert the calamities of war. Sennacherib accepted the proposals for peace on condition that the King of Judah paid three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold—more than £200,000 of our money. The sum was raised with great difficulty, and given to the King of Assyria; but as soon as he received it he basely broke faith with Hezekiah, and intimated his intention to wage war. Accordingly Sennacherib sent three of his generals in charge of armed men to besiege Jerusalem unless it surrendered. The terms of the message brought by

these generals were so insulting to Hezekiah and to the God whom he worshipped, that he resolved at once to withstand a foe so utterly destitute both of piety toward God and decency toward man. He felt what all truly right-minded men feel to-day, that there is a limit beyond which quietude is cowardice and silence is sin; that peace at any price is a favourite principle with the "Prince of this world"—a principle which, if always followed, would sell the very Church of Christ to the In the stand which the king made he was devil. supported by the prophet Isaiah, who in the Lord's name promised the utter overthrow of the Assyrian hosts if Hezekiah kept true to the right. The threatening letter which Sennacherib sent to Hezekiah was laid before the Lord, and the good King craved the interposition of the Most High. His prayer was heard, and the answer of the Lord was vouchsafed through the mouth of Isaiah. The day of terrible suspense drew to its close. Few could have slept that night in Jerusalem, and what transpired outside the favoured city is best described by the inspired words: "It came to pass that the Angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand." By what means this terrible visitation was accomplished, whether by the hot pestilential wind or by a plague, we cannot say. It is enough for us to know that He, who has all the powers of nature under His undisputed control, that night swept out of terrestrial existence 185,000 men.

[&]quot;The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold, And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold; Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green, The host with their banners at sunset were seen.

- "Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown, The host on the morrow lay wither'd and strewn, For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast, And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd.
- "And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
 And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!
 And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
 Though through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride.
- "And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
 The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown,
 And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

Humanity is frail. The loftiest as well as the lowliest is exposed to sickness and disease. Kings as well as their subjects are not impervious to the effects of anxiety and excitement. Hence, whilst Hezekiah was perplexed and agitated by the doings of Sennacherib, he was seized with illness—an illness which brought him to the very gates of the grave. Most pathetic is the record of his utterances, as preserved by Isaiah (Isaiah xxx. 8). Turning his face to the wall, he called upon that God The earnest and bewhom he had loved and served. lieving cry was speedily answered. The prophet Isaiah entered the sick chamber with the surprising tidings that, in three days, the king would be restored to health, and his life prolonged fifteen additional years. As a sign that the words of the seer should be fulfilled, God caused the shadow of the sun upon the dial of Ahaz to go back ten degrees. On the third day the monarch recovered, and very hearty and expressive were his thanksgivings. Never before or since has any man possessed an exact knowledge of the length of his days:

and peculiarly strange must have been the feelings with which Hezekiah watched year after year, of the fifteen allotted him, depart. They were, however, peaceful and prosperous. When, after a reign of twenty-nine years, the sceptre fell from his grasp, and the crown from his brow before the touch of death, great was the lamentation among his subjects. They had learnt to love him and trust him. Many who, when he first came to the throne, shook their heads with ominous fears, and were ready to express themselves harshly concerning the young king's reformation work, now felt that they had mistaken the man. Time proved him to be a consistent, courageous, devout, God-honouring, champion for the unadulterated truth of God. funeral was one of unusual public demonstration. Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death." His remains were deposited in the highest niche in the sepulchre of the sons of David, and the inspired scribe wrote concerning him :-- "After him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

Such a career of usefulness and honour I hold up to you, young men, for your constant imitation. I would have you from early years to be valiant for the faith delivered to the saints. You will find it desirable and necessary at times to contend for purity and truth. The contention may not be agreeable to your tastes, and may involve you in much self-sacrifice, but it is often Heaven's method of serving the cause of righteousness, just as God clears the atmosphere by thunderstorms and tempests. Think of Hezekiah's efforts, despite the opposition of his subjects; think of the prophet of Horeb, and his contention with and triumph over

the priests of Baal; think of Paul encountering the Stoics and Epicurean philosophers at Athens; think of Apollo's "mightily convincing the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ;" ay, think of our Divine Master disputing with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and as you think of these bright examples, hear the voice of Jude still sounding down the corridor of centuries, and saying, "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." I do not ask you, young men, to court disputation and conflict, but I beg you not to shun it when occasion demands. I do not ask you to hurry into a collision, but not to stand by a silent, idle spectator when truth and error, right and wrong, are in combat. I do not advise your rashly challenging the leaders of the false, but not to refuse to take up the gauntlet when virtue is defied. I beg you to spend your best energies in work for Christ, but whilst working with one hand, be sure and hold a weapon in the other. Whilst tending the sheep, be ready to drive away the wolves. Your lot, dear brethren, is cast in remarkable times, and there are days about to dawn which will be crowded with bitter strife. I count it an honour to live in days like these when there are occasions given us to exercise and develop all that is noble, manly, courageous, and persevering in our natures—occasions afforded us for winning some of the honours won by our pious and heroic Events are travelling fast, and a disciplined ear can catch the sound of forces preparing for a battle. I wish none of you to be wanting. Our holy faith deserves a holy fervour on our part for its defence. Our cause is righteous and honourable. Our Leader is wise and valorous. Our supplies from Heaven's treasury are

inexhaustible. Our ultimate victory is secure. But, brothers, you must be resolute, vehement, impartial, prudent and persevering.

I beg you, then, to observe that such a courageous defence of the truth must spring from spiritual enlighten-There must be a living conviction and a loving attachment to the truth in your own heart. Thus was it with Hezekiah. It is written of him, "He clave to the Lord and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses." If Hezekiah's mind had not been delivered from the darkness, ignorance, and superstition that prevailed, he would never have been the man he was. If his nature had not been introduced into the liberty and light of true godliness, he would never have wrought such a work of reformation for his subjects. But he was early brought to love the Lord, to love His Word, to reverence His precepts, to bow at His footstool in importunate prayer, to keep his heart open to the Divine dictates, and his will ever ready to perform the unerring behests. Hence he was prepared to influence others in the same direction. So must it be with you. brethren. You must first know, love, and follow the truth before you can ever successfully and courageously defend or disseminate it. In the physical world there must be first some vital and prolific seed, which contains in itself the life which is to be developed before there can be any organic and enduring production. In like manner, there must be in your spirit a positive acquaintance with and attachment to the fundamental verities of God. The merely negative will not do. Doubts, objections, hostilities to existing errors will not be enough. There must be confidence, assurance,

determined clinging to the aspects of Divine truth presented in the Holy Book. There must be life in vou. or you will be unable to act with lasting, living effects on those about you. Your own soul must be the battlefield on which the first victory must be won; and in the degree in which you are successful there will be your triumphs over humanity. It has ever been so among our great Reformers. Had Luther not learned by glad experience the doctrine of justification by faith, and realised that he had firm footing therein, he would not have stirred Europe as he did. If his own mind had not been enlightened, and his heart renewed, he would have been unable to fathom the unsatisfied yearnings of the souls of others. But he knew the preciousness of the truth he had sought for with so much agony, and that was the secret spring of his undaunted labour. He had in solitude striven to find the light—to find Christ, and, having succeeded, he was ready at all costs to publish his triumph. We beseech you, then, young men, to know Christ, to acquaint yourselves with His will, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Sure I am that when you once feel and see the beauty and blessedness of Divine life as it is disclosed in the grand old Bible, you will be ready to do your utmost to spread it. Julius Cæsar, approaching Rome, said, "They that will not fight for this city, what city will they fight for?" And so I say, they who will not boldly contend for the simple, pure, hallowing, consoling, and transforming principles of our holy religion are surely too cowardly to contend for anything. Sirs, get your strength by heartfelt contact with the source of truth. Near the cross is the nursery of courage.

"If the chosen souls could never be alone
In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
No greatness ever had been dreamed or done;
Among dull hearts a prophet never grew;
The nurse of full-grown souls is solitude.

I ask you now to observe further, that a courageous defence of the truth must be preserved by confidence in Thus was it with Hezekiah. It is written in 2 Kings xviii, 5, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel." That trust strengthened him for the task he set himself so resolutely to perform—that trust carried him victoriously through it—that trust was the linking of his weakness to infinite strength, that trust was the placing of the child's hand in the hand of the Father of Spirits. All things were possible to him then. So, dear sirs, if you or I desire to be kept firm and unfaltering in our grasp of the truth, and our labours for its spread, we must have faith in God. It is written, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass"-or literally-"Roll thy undertakings on the Lord; trust also upon Him, and He will do it." Yes, He will do what you are inadequate to do, and He will aid you to do rightly what He calls you to perform. It was confidence in God that kept Luther like a rock in the midst of the ocean. Hear his words, "Expect everything from me except flight and recantation. Fly I cannot: recant I will not." On another occasion, when Spalatin sent a messenger imploring him not to enter Worms, his reply is well-known to the youngest among us, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the houses, I would enter." And then when he stood before the august assembly he calmly replied, "I can and will retract nothing; for it is not safe for the

Christian to speak against his conscience." Would you know the secret of such kingly strength? come with me, and listen to his prayer. "God unchanging! I rely on no man. It is in vain. All that is of man totters; all that proceeds from man fades away. Oh God! Oh God! hearest Thou not? God! art Thou dead? Thou but hidest Thyself; Thou hast chosen me for this work-I know it. Keep Thee by my side; I am ready to quit my life for Thy truth. I will not withdraw from Thee now, nor in all eternity. Though the world should be filled with demons, though my body, which is yet the work of Thy hands, should be forced to bite the dust, to be stretched on the ground, cut in pieces, reduced to powder, my soul is Thine; Thine is my soul! it will dwell eternally near Thee! Oh God! aid me." It is by such reliance upon Omnipotent Grace that we shall be strong and stable. When a man knows that his cause is a right one, and feels that he can with a calm conscience lay the matter before God, as Hezekiah did the threatening letter, then he can repose upon the Almighty. That reliance upon the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength, will keep him faithful at the post of duty, and will, at the same time, preserve his spirit in perfect peace. those heights above us, where nothing ever disturbs the serenity-or like those depths of the mighty ocean which are never agitated by storms—the man who trusts in the Lord with all his heart possesses an equanimity which renders him strong and persevering.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the courageous and consistent defence of the truth will always meet with the approval of heaven. Of Hezekiah it is said: "The Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he

went forth"; and again in 2 Chronicles xxxii. 27, it is written: "Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour; and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil: and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him substance very much." He encountered opposition at the first, but that was overruled, and his efforts became favoured by both God and man. He learnt that "when a man's ways please the Lord He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Fifteen years were added to his pilgrimage and his reign-years mainly characterised by peace to the nation, prosperity in commerce, and pleasure to himself. And when his end came, and the record of his life was penned for subsequent generations, the noblest testimony was borne to his character and career—a testimony that kindles in our breasts a holy and laudable aspiration.

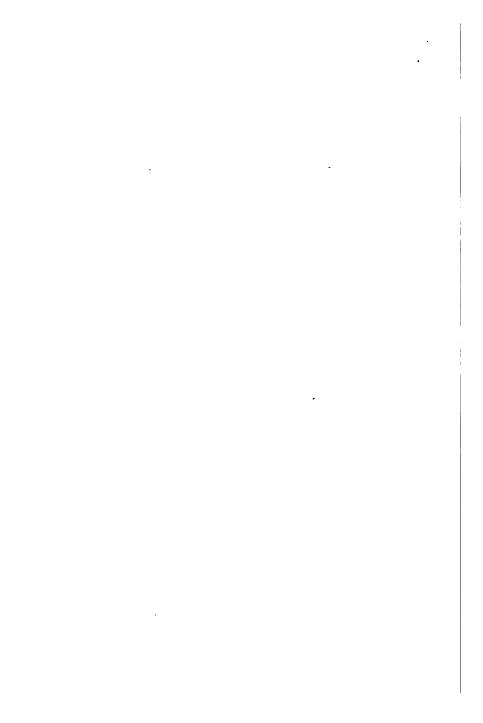
Dear young men, be you well assured that nothing was ever lost by conscientious, courageous, consistent conflict for Christ and His truth. I do not say that wealth shall be bestowed upon you as a reward for your zeal for the Lord—though even that may be granted if God deem it best. But I can promise you the benediction of the Most High, which will make all circumstances and surroundings contribute to your peace and pleasure. We are told that Cyrus gave Artabasus, one of his courtiers, a cup of gold, at the same time giving his favourite Chrysantas nothing but a kiss, whereupon Artabasus said, "Sire, the cup you gave me was not so

good gold as the kiss you gave Chrysantas." So I say to you, young men, wordly riches may not be so valuable and serviceable to you as some other bestowment of Heaven. The sweet kiss of Divine favour, the sunny smile of a Saviour's approbation will be far more golden than much worldly goods laid up for many years. That token of Divine approval you shall have, if, like Hezekiah, trusting in the Lord, walking in his commandments, and commending your cause to Him, you are valiant for truth and righteousness. But remember God and truth must come first in your estimate; yourself and your fellow-men last. Aristotle well said, "Though Socrates be a friend, and Plato be a friend. yet the truth is to be preferred before them both." Better far, if it must be so, that we alienate from us all our professed friends than that we suffer the truth of Jesus to be dragged through the mire of the world, and the crown rights of the King of kings to be trampled under foot. We shall never want a friend so long as purity and truth are on our side. In the dying words of John Wesley we shall be able to exclaim, "The best of all is, God is with us!"

Now, then, brothers, I summon you to the conflict on behalf of truth and Christ. I call upon you first to surrender your own spirits to the world's Redeemer, and then array yourselves upon the side of His true followers. It is said that when the Scythians were outmatched in battle they retired till they reached the graves of their fathers, and there they unflinchingly stood to conquer or die. I would now conduct you to the tombs of the noble and sainted men who have preceded us, not because we are overpowered, but that may awaken in your breasts a feeling of unwavering

resolution to support the truth. I take you to the last resting-place of Hezekiah, Daniel, Stephen, John, Paul, and, later still, to the graves of Wickliffe, Huss, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer, Baxter, Taylor, Chillingworth, and others, and there I pledge you to an undying allegiance to Christ. By the memory of men who waded through a sea of troubles to preserve the Koh-i-noor of truth—by the memory of men who at terrific price became a "compact nucleus" for systems which bless the world—by the memory of men who, as by a superhuman power, braved contumely persecution, and physical torture—aye, by the memory of men who prized the truth more than life, and calmly ascended the scaffold to endorse it with their blood, I call upon you young men to uphold the Christian faith.

- "Dare to be right, dare to be true;
 Other men's failures can never save you;
 Stand by your conscience, your honour, your faith;
 Stand like a hero, and battle till death!
- "Dare to be right, dare to be true;
 Keep the great judgment-day always in view,
 Look at your work, as you'll look at it then,
 Scanned by Jehovah, and angels, and men.
- "Dare to be right, dare to be true; God who created you, cares for you too, Wipes off the tears that His striving ones shed, Counts and protects every hair of your head.
- "Dare to be right, dare to be true; Cannot Omnipotence carry you through? City, and mansion, and throne all in view, Cannot you dare to be right and be true?
- "Dare to be right, dare to be true;
 Prayerfully, lovingly, firmly pursue
 The pathway by saints, and by seraphim trod,
 The pathway which leads to the city of God."



LECTURE VII.

JOSIAH; OR, THE GLORY OF A GODLY LIFE.

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MONGST the unfounded and misleading complaints brought by unbelievers against the religion of the Bible is the assertion that it disqualifies its possessor for the full and faithful discharge of the duties of life; that it operates as a dead weight upon the man in the feverish race of earthly existence; that it largely prevents success in the stern competition for worldly place, possessions, and influence. This is an objection in frequent use among godless and graceless men. It has proved one of the most destructive wiles of the evil spirit. Many a young man has been deterred from seeking an experimental acquaintance with Divine truth and the Divine Source of truth by this specious misrepresentation. If, then, we can falsify the evil report of the inexperienced and prejudiced spies; if we can tear away the hideous and horrifying visor which deceitful hands have placed on the sunny, spotless, serene face of piety; if we can show that religion is not a hindrance but a help, not a stumbling-block but a stimulus, not a blot upon the career but a brilliant in the character; if we can prove that, instead of unfitting its recipient for the varied avocations of the present scene, it is the only solid and lasting qualification which he can possess, we shall render

service to the cause of truth, the cause of Christ, and may lead some soul oscillating betwixt light and darkness to determine to follow the Lord. The gratification and the glory of a godly life may be seen in the experience and career of many worthy men whose biographies are preserved in the sacred pages, and not the least among them is the youthful Josiah.

He was only eight years of age when put in possession of Judah's sceptre. A lad in a position of such supreme importance was exposed to imminent and incessant perils. To the dangers which always environ youth there were added the peculiar temptations arising from his elevated rank, and the freedom to do and procure whatever he might desire. We rejoice, therefore, to find it stated of this juvenile monarch: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David, his father, and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left." That is a declaration designed to teach not that there were no imperfections, no failings in his character and conduct, but that the tenor of his life was in harmony with the will of Jehovah, that he made the great business of his days that of seeking the honour of the Most High. When only sixteen years of age he exhibited an invincible antipathy to the idolatry which prevailed, and before he was twenty years old he became engaged in declared and undisguised warfare with that God-dishonouring system. He threw his whole soul into the work of destroying the common evil of his age. He superintended the breaking and burning of the images, the demolition of the houses close by the Temple, which were occupied by persons who aided in the licentions rites, and the overthrow of the sanctuaries that stood just outside the gates of Jerusalem. The alters

which Ahaz and Manasseh had reared were all destroyed, and the dust cast into the brook Kidron. The high places were desecrated by being covered with the bones of the dead; and then, as had been foretold 326 years before the birth of Josiah, he carried his zealous and reformative work to the sanctuaries of Bethel and Samaria. He slew all the priests found ministering at those shrines, and having exhumed the bones of those who were dead, he caused them to be scattered on the sites of the idolatrous altars at which the departed priests had formerly officiated. Such determined efforts as these were successful in ostracising the curse of idolatry.

Having thus discountenanced the false, Josiah proceeded to encourage and promote the true. Having demolished the places where the things seen were deified, he commenced repairing and beautifying the house where the unseen Lord of all was worshipped. In the eighteenth year of his reign, and the twentysixth of his age, he commenced the work of restoring the Temple, which during the previous reign had fallen into shameful neglect. During the progress of the work the high priest Hilkiah discovered amid the accumulated rubbish a roll or book containing the law as given by Moses. What was the precise nature of the document we cannot satisfactorily say. Some are of opinion that it was simply the book of Deuteronomy, whilst others say it was the entire Pentateuch. Whatever it was, manifestly it was a new thing to Josiah. He had been previously in ignorance of much, if not all, of the contents of the volume. He was filled with astonishment when he heard some portions read. rent his clothes with intense sorrow and vexation when

he found that, with all his endeavours to uproot the upas tree of idolatry and spread the true worship of God, he and his people had been unacquainted with duties of vital importance. Having conferred with Huldah, the prophetess, he at once summoned the people generally. An immense concourse of priests, prophets, and "people both small and great" assembled in the Temple. The king, taking his stand at the entrance of the inner court, and leaning against a pillar, read from the newly-discovered book. He then pledged the people to observe the words of the Lord, and to keep the commandments "with all their heart and all their soul." How noble is the sight! to live before our eyes as though we saw it on the artist's canvas. A sea of upturned, anxious faces surrounding the Royal Reformer, who, erect, with God's Word in his hand, and God's glory before his aspiring gaze, is seeking to lift his subjects from the low level of their moral and spiritual life into the blessed, beautiful, and holy region of conformity to the Divine will. fine subject for a skilful artist, and a suggestive study for all crowned heads! Would to God our Royal princes were public expounders of Divine truth! Happy would be the realm where the monarch thought it not beneath his dignity to be a minister of Christ! The public reading of the law was soon followed by the observance of the passover. The magnificence of the festival was wholly unexampled. The celebration in the reign of Hezekiah was not equal in grandeur to this. It is written, "There was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites,

and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Thus are the good effects of the king's conduct recorded. Thus it is seen that the pious life and persevering labours of Josiah exerted an influence upon his subjects for their good and for Heaven's glory.

But the revival was not deep-rooted. Corruption had become so widespread and powerful that the doom of the kingdom was fixed. The Almighty determined to punish the idolaters, but resolved also to free His servant Josiah from the painful lot of those who despised His message. This deliverance had been the burden of prophecy, for we read (2 Kings xxii. 19-20), "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered unto thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." Those words were fulfilled in a manner and at a time Josiah least expected. The king of Egypt and the king of Assyria were engaged in open hostilities one with the other. To effect his warlike designs. the king of Egypt arranged to pass through the territories of Josiah, which were interjacent to those of the hostile king's. Josiah promptly refused permission to the Egyptians to make a passage through his kingdom, and directed speedy preparations to resist, even to blood. Accordingly the troops were called out for immediate service. The war-spirit ran high. No soldier in the

ranks under the command of such a good king could brook the slightest shade of dishonour on the national flag. The battle-plain was reached. Near Megiddo the hostile powers stood face to face. The heartrending scene of strife and bloodshed commenced. Lo! in the midst of the conflict a cry of lamentation was heard, and many a faithful Hebrew ran to the quarter whence the cry proceeded, but it was too late. An arrow shot from the bow of some Egyptian archer had made the heart of Josiah its target—the king was fatally wounded. He was removed from one chariot to the other, quickly driven to Jerusalem, and there carefully attended; but human skill could avail nothing. Nature could not resist the stroke, for it was dealt by an omnipotent hand. Soon the silence and solemnity of death reigned in the royal chamber of the famed, youthful, pious Israelite. In the very vigour of manhood, in the midst of service for his country, when only thirty-nine years of age, the king was beckoned from earth, and the nation lost its loved and honoured leader. Who shall say how many plans of usefulness in an embryotic state were for ever left unfinished? Who can tell what bright prospects of peace, or, on the other hand, what mountainous difficulties were crushed, exterminated, dispelled in that moment when Josiah fell? This we can affirm, that in the sight of the Divine Arbiter of life the young king's work was done, and it was in mercy that he was removed so suddenly from among men.

There followed poignant grief, for the king of Judah was greatly beloved. Not only did the members of the royal household feel the pungency of pain, "All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah." Young men and maidens, old men and children—all, of every age and

every class, joined in the general grief. The "singing men and singing women "-that is, the hired mourners who make it a profession to sing funeral dirges, strike their breasts, rend their clothes, and shriek and howl at the departure of a soul—attended to aid the mourners by their doleful noise. Universal grief was felt at the departure of the king. All willingly admitted his excellent character and solid worth. In every home there were those who mourned for him "as one mourneth for his only son," and were "in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Very much is conveyed in the few words, "And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah." That short statement alone is sufficient to show the virtue and value of the King of Judah. Jeremiah was an ardent lover of God and all goodness. was a seer whose soul was filled with intense antipathy to and sorrow on account of sin. For him to mourn the decease of Josiah was a tribute of praise of no ordinary character. It was as though the prophet felt that there was one godly man the less; that the world had lost the influence of his consecrated life, the benefit of his zealous labours, the glorious answer to his believing prayers; that a righteous man who contributed to the strength of the nation was removed for ever.

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Thus ended the career of one of the most beloved monarchs Israel ever possessed—the most useful and heroic man of his age. He was removed in the very zenith of his life. He had, however, accomplished more in the thirty-nine years allotted him than multitudes with equal advantages have wrought by a protracted history. But what made that short career so successful? What was the secret of all the good he effected, all the

love he won, all the willing co-operation he secured, and all the guileless lamentation by which his death was followed? It cannot be said that it was found in the bald fact of monarchy. His position as king of Israel is not enough to explain the deep, sincere, lasting attachment of the people to Josiah, and the good he accomplished among them. Monarchy undoubtedly places within the reach of the man who reigns a marvellous power for either good or evil. A homely word from kingly lips is weightier than a hundred sagacious utterances from commoners. An act performed by royalty will spread its sturdy influence to the most distant in the circumference of power. But the ungarnished fact that a man is a king is not enough to make his name dear, his person loved, his memory blessed. There must be something deeper and more enduring than mere titles, something at the basis and back of hereditary position and honour, something that would ennoble even if state dignity, dress, and dominancy were wrested from the grasp. That potent something was characteristic of Josiah. Hence, dear young brethren, do not suppose I am setting before you an impossible task when I ask you to be like Josiah. Do not suppose that because he was a monarch, and you are lowly in your origin and occupation, the idea of being loved, influential for good, and regretted at your departure, is Utopian. There were certain marked features of his character which made him what he was, and these I press upon your attention. Remember that whilst his position as monarch made his influence greater, yet it rendered the cultivation of the excellences I am about to refer to more difficult. You may justly feel that while you are devoid of any help to usefulness which his royal relationship afforded, you are, on the other hand, freed from the terrible hindrances which that relationship created.

Josiah cultivated his intellectual powers. He did not plead his position as an excuse for search after knowledge. He did not proudly imagine that, because he was surrounded by sage and scholarly men to counsel him, he need not indulge in any mental effort. anxiously was he in quest of the fullest information, especially upon things Divine, that he conferred with Hilkiah the priest, and was ready to receive instruction from him. An excellent trait in any man's character is the thirst for knowledge, and the resolute effort to develop the mental powers. But specially is this to be commended in young men. By it the humblest may rise to exert an influence most potent and salutary throughout all lands and all ages. By it the mind of a youth in any grade in life may, like the sun, be a centre of gracious influence and a source of gladdening light to multitudes, whilst other men, like the moon, may be slavishly dependent upon him.

Josiah cultivated sensibility of heart. He was not a man of icy intellectualism living in a region of frigid theories. He did not develop his mind at the expense of his heart. He was awake to all the sorrows and joys of those about him. He is proclaimed by God to be a man of "tender" heart. The sight or sound of woe vibrated upon his reponsive soul. My brothers, I beg you to cherish the same sympathetic spirit. Never be guilty of estimating your fellow-creatures simply and entirely by an icy intellectual standard. Never allow either your sensibilities or your intellect to be alone; for sensibility without understanding will morbidly reduce

you, even as the convolvulus without a support will trail on the ground, and intellectuality without tenderness of heart will leave you stern, cold, forbidding, even as a hop-pole without the twining plant. On one occasion the great scholar and divine, Bishop Horsley, sat far on into the night earnestly discussing with Dr. Jackson, Dean of Christchurch. The subject of debate was whether the creature could more readily reach God through the intellect or through the affections. Bishop Horsley advocated the claims of intellect with all the powers he could summon to his aid, but the arguments of Dr. Jackson in favour of the affections were too strong to be overthrown. At last, in a spirit of admirable candour, as creditable to his heart as to his head, Bishop Horsley exclaimed, "Then my whole life has been one great mistake." Dear sirs, avoid that Do not neglect the cultivation of your minds mistake. to the utmost of your power, but at the same time see to it that intellectual activity is not a substitute for tender sympathy. Go forth into life with the language of that beautiful hymn of Waring's upon your mind-

"Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate;
A work of lowly love to do
For him on whom I wait."

But note particularly that Josiah cultivated spiritual life. He loved the God of his fathers. He pursued the perceptible path of the Divine precepts. He turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left. Loving the Lord himself, he used all his energies in uproot-

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ing prevalent evils, and disseminating the pure and true worship of the Most High. This spirituality was the chief feature of his character. The soul being right with God, the intellect and the sympathies were allied in the service of God. All his faculties and possessions bowed in willing allegiance to his devout soul. This was the main secret of all his acceptance with man and God.

It is to this, then, that I specially call your attention, young men. I see before me two youths just entering The first has bright scenes, fair prospects, and much social influence to aid him. His imagination pencils a long, prosperous, popular career. His noble brow, thoughtful eye, and correct, considerate speech bespeak power of mind and cultivation of genius. The muscular frame, firm step, and face tinted with the rosehue of health, betoken his youthful energy and strength, which, if rightly husbanded, will serve to render his life a highly successful one. He enters on the ocean of life alone. The Pilot of the Galilean lake is not on board his frail bark: the chart of heaven—the Bible—is not his guide. He associates with the ungodly; he sits in the seat of the scornful; he joins hands with the thoughtless to do evil. A few years pass and I meet him again. Lo! he is a sickly, pale, ghost-like form. His sunken eye, parched lip, feverish brow, trembling hands, gray locks, and enfeebled memory, all speak aloud of the evils of an irreligious life—a life of excess, a life of vice, a life spent without the fear and love of God. But the second youth commences life about the same time and in similar circumstances, with one great difference—he loves and serves Christ. Religion teaches him to curb his desires, to

seek pleasure from its legitimate sources. It reminds him that he is not his own, and that his health must not be wasted by neglect, nor worn by excessive fatigue. It tells him that his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, that inattention must not leave the door open for the stealthy entrance of disease, nor carelessness leave the temple undefended from the fierce onslaught of lust. It inculcates the speaking of truth, and so strikes at the root of falsehood, equivocation, and exaggeration. demands the abandonment of deceit, and so requires attention to duty and integrity of action. for charity towards men, and so prevents the miserly hoarding of wealth, which makes a man hated of men. The consequence is when years afterwards I next meet this young man, I find him with physical health and strength, with a growing reputation for usefulness, with increasing worldly substance, with a peaceful conscience, the possessor of many true friends, and the happy expectant of eternal honours. The one youth started on his career without devotion to the Saviour, at the mercy of his own unaided judgment and will, and the result is lamentable failure; the other takes Christ as his teacher. friend, supporter, and guide, and his progress is upward and onward in the untangled paths on which the light of Heaven and the smile of good men always rest. one realises that the way of the wicked God turns upside down, the other that "godliness is profitable unto all things." Such are the secular aspects of Christianity -the bearings religion has upon our daily life. I am sure you will admit it to be desirable. If by it you gain the unwavering esteem of your fellow-men, rise to the occupation of a better position in the world, possess comparative freedom from harassing fears, enjoy comfort amid

sufferings and vicissitudes, and carry a conscience void of offence, you will pronounce it an unspeakable advantage. Should you find one day—as you never will that the religion of the Bible is a lie; that there is no God the Maker and Upholder of all, no Son the Redeemer and Intercessor of all, no Spirit the Enlightener and Sanctifier of all who come to God; that there is no heaven with its effulgent glories, no hell with its unutterable horrors, and no hereafter for the spirit of manyou will, notwithstanding, be an immense gainer by the reception of Divine truth and the pursuit of it. In this light Lord Byron regarded the subject when he made the following confession: -- "Indisputably, firm the believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others, for the simlpe reason, that if true they will have their reward hereafter, and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life without subsequent disappointment, since at the worst for them, out of nothing nothing can arise, not even sorrow."

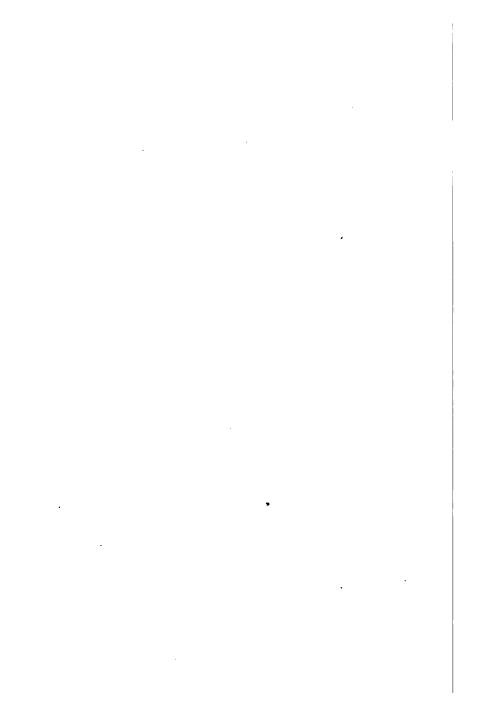
To Josiah God gave the promise—"I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." His death whilst in the vigour of manhood was a reward for his true devotion to God's cause. For surely nothing can better satisfy the heart that cravingly thirsts for God—the living God—than immediate and uninterrupted communion with the beatific Presence. "The less of this cold earth the more of heaven." That Josiah died suddenly on the field of battle does not prove that his end was not one of peace. He fell at the post of duty

—he fell doing that which he deemed right before God and man; and how better would a Christian man desire to pass away? He was mercifully spared prolonged agonies and anxieties, and he was taken away from the evil to come. Fighting he fell, and falling he rose to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. Who would not wish to pass his days with the honour and happiness that Josiah tasted? Who, standing in thought by the grave of the beloved but youthful monarch, does not say—" Let me die the death of the

righteous, and let my last end be like his."

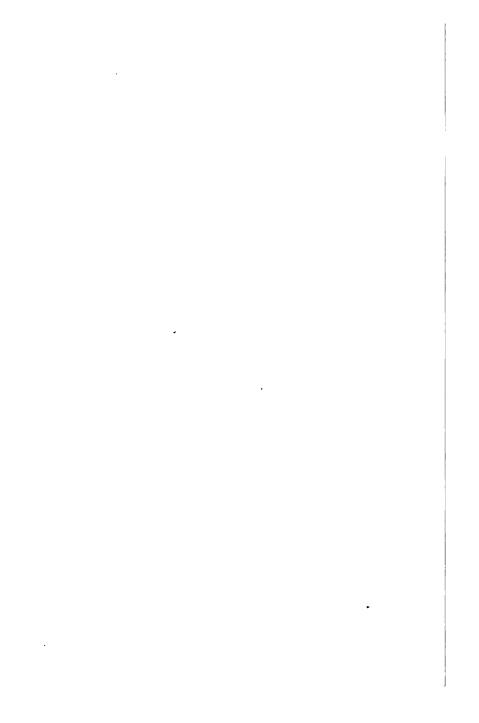
Learn, dear sir, that religion is profitable for both It not only makes a man honourable, happy, and useful in this life, it elevates him to the ranks of sinless intelligences. It places in his hand a cup of inexhaustible bliss, on his brow a coronet of untarnished glory, o'er his shoulders a garment of unspotted purity, and in his mouth a song of everlasting triumph. you live respected and die regretted? Then become decided on the Lord's side. Piety is the shortest, safest, and most pleasurable path to immortal renown. Would you answer the grand design of your existence? Would you glorify God here and hereafter? Then give your heart I invite you to Him to Jesus and follow in His steps. now. Oh! my heart is full, my spirit is saddened, I could weep when I think that some of you have lived. are living and dying without godliness; that some of you, so shrewd and so zealous in all matters pertaining to the present existence, are so utterly indifferent in relation to the things which make for your eternal wellbeing. Oh men and brethren, your souls, your priceless imperishable souls, what provision are you making for It is passing strange that we have to plead with

you, and implore you so often to accept peerless honours, permanent riches, and endless joys, when your spirits thirst for these things, and they are offered you without money and without price. Once more, I beseech you exercise simple faith in Him who taketh away the sins of the world—your sins—and who says, "whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."



LECTURE VIII.

DANIEL; OR, THE GAIN OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS.



LECTURE VIII.

DANIEL; OR, THE GAIN OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS.

IN the ranks of holy men of old, Daniel stands first in the order of excellency. He has been pronounced the blameless man. Whilst in the careers of other saints there have been occasional falterings in the path of purity, in the life of Daniel we cannot detect the smallest departure from the line of integrity. He commenced his course with a thorough devotedness to the service of God, and he finished with a character untarnished, and with a reputation for prudence, courage, consistency, piety, which places him foremost among the exemplifications of enlightened and sanctified humanity. As we study his life and character, may we see how possible it is for man to retain purity of life in defiance of the multiform seductions of society and the terrors of the world—how, by the invincible grace of God, we may keep a conscience void of offence even when all our surroundings are antagonistic to our spiritual life.

Daniel was born about 620 years B.C., during the reign of the pious monarch Josiah. He is supposed to have been of the blood-royal of Judah, and a native of Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, Daniel was amongst others who were carried captive to Babylon. His exact age at the time of his arrival in

Babylon is uncertain. Some affirm that he was only twelve years old, others that he was sixteen. It is very certain that he was quite a youth when he was exposed to the luxury, levity, and licentiousness of the wicked city. He was selected for the office of page or personal attendant upon the Babylonish monarch, and, according to the practice which is continued still in the service of the Sultan, he received a new name. "Daniel" was changed into the Chaldean name "Belteshazzar"which signifies "the man for whom Bel lays up secret treasures." He was placed, with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, under the care of Ashpenarz, that he might receive that training necessary for an Oriental courtier. Very early in life he had embraced the religion of his fathers, and lived in conformity to its hallowed principles. Those principles were soon severely tested after he reached Babylon. It was customary for the persons who were being trained for the King's service to feast upon the bounties of the royal table, so that their appearance may be comely. Daniel, having learnt to practice temperance in eating and drinking, and not wishing to conform to the evil habits of the idolaters about him, declined the luxuries which were provided. He ultimately obtained permission to live upon pulse and water for ten days as an experiment, and when at the expiration of that time there was no diminution of health, vigour, and beauty, he was allowed permanently to decline the King's meat and wine and adhere to his own simple food. During their term of instruction the four Hebrew exiles made marked and satisfactory progress in all their branches of learning. But chief amongst them was Daniel. Special endowments were bestowed upon him.

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"had understanding in all visions and dreams." After the lapse of three years, devoted to the course of discipline, Daniel was introduced to the Court of Nebuchadnezzar, and proved himself, as a counsellor, far superior to all the wise men by whom the monarch was surrounded. He had not served the King long before his life was jeopardised by the tyrannical decree of the troubled monarch. Nebuchadnezzar was perplexed by a dream, of which both the substance and the meaning had passed from his mind, and he decreed that unless some one of the wise men of his kingdom disclosed the dream and the interpretation thereof, all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed. The state of things being known to Daniel, he submitted the matter in prayer to the Allwise God. Light from the eternal throne was given him, and he was enabled to lay the particulars of the monarch's dream and its meaning before his Royal master. The result was that he was elevated to the governorship of the province of Babylon, and his honours and riches accumulated. This position of prosperity and influence he enjoyed for many years, for their is a long gap in his history before we meet with him again. About twenty years must have passed away between his first advancement and his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. Faithful to his God, his monarch, and truth, Daniel earnestly warned and entreated the King. He laid before him the only way to acceptance with Heaven, and besought him to pursue the course which would secure his peace and well-being. Under the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel seems to have passed a more private life. held any office at Court it must have been a very subordinate one. His good services in the past were overlooked. His claims upon the esteem and reverence of those in authority were apparently denied. He was allowed to remain in the cold shade till he was again sadly needed.

The occasion which brought him prominently before the Court and the nation in the reign of Belshazzar was the remarkable vision at the impious feast. In the fourth year of Belshazzar's reign, the King invited to his palace a thousand of his lords. All the luxuries which the East could produce were provided, and the festal board was laden with splendour. To add to the brilliancy of the display, the consecrated vessels of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem, were brought into use-desecrated by polluted idolaters. Mirth ran high, for wine was abundant. But in the midst of the drunken revelry, the attention of the King was suddenly directed to the hand of an invisible being writing a few but mysterious words upon the wall. His thoughts troubled him; and the astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers were summoned to the banqueting hall. In vain they essayed to interpret the words, and terribly perplexed was Belshazzar. At the suggestion of the queen-mother, Daniel was called. We can imagine the calm dignity, the conscious moral superiority with which he entered that room, crowded with bewildered, lewd, and drunken men and women. We can discern the air of mingled pity and disgust which sat upon his expressive face as he looked upon the scene before him. His holy soul must have shrunk from the beast-like indulgence which was visible around him. Daniel was then an old man, and the proffers made him of rewards and honours were nought to him. He at once, with heroic nobility, proDaniel. 137

ceeded to the task before him, and as he explained the mystic oracle he preached such a thrilling homily in the hearing of the excited King and courtiers as had never before fallen upon their ears. What were the feelings of the monarch, his princes, nobles, wives, and concubines, we cannot conceive. They had not long to interchange opinions concerning this strange interruption of their orgie. That very night the monarch was slain, Babylon was taken, and the kingdom divided.

Darius then became sovereign. He commenced his reign by dividing the kingdom into one hundred and twenty provinces. Over these he placed three presidents, or chief governors; and, having heard of the wisdom, experience, and ability of Daniel, Darius made him first among these presidents. Indeed, it is written, he "thought to set him over the whole realm." Honours always bring with them anxieties. was not long in the position of pre-eminence before the envious eyes of his subordinate officers were fastened upon him, with a view to detect, if they could, some flaw in his character and conduct. The princes and presidents leagued together to complain of him to the King if in his State avocation they could detect a fault. But they were compelled to own, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." With the utmost plausibility they induced Darius to pass a lawforbidding any person in the realm offering a petition to any god or man except the King. This statute was to have relation to the period of thirty days from a given date, and the penalty attached to the violation of the law was that the offender should be cast into a den of lions. Daniel heard all this, and knew full well what was

the design of such a law, and who were the prime movers in its introduction. But his conscience wavered not. His heart was open toward God, as the window of his chamber stood open towards Jerusalem. Not for all the lions of the forest would he deny the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." The authority of an earthly monarch was nothing when it stood in manifest opposition to the supreme authority of the King of kings. Hence, with calm consistency, with undeviating regularity, and with no cowardly privacy, Daniel still prayed three times a day. The result was his being speedily arraigned before the King. The execution of the law was rigorously insisted upon by the presidents and princes, and Daniel was cast into the lions' den. How Heaven interposed on his behalfhow the night spent in the company of the ferocious lions was a night of safety; how, in the morning, the King visited the den, and ordered the immediate release of the prophet; how Daniel uttered not one word of reproach concerning his enemies; how those who united to seek his destruction were themselves destroyed—we have all been told, again and again. romantic and exciting narrative has charmed us from our childhood. Daniel was once more raised to honour. and spent the remainder of his days in seeking the return of the exiles to their own country, and in receiving and recording the visions which are preserved in the Sacred Book.

Of the closing days of Daniel's life we know nothing certainly. Josephus says, "He was so happy as to have strange revelations made to him, and those as to one of the greatest of the prophets, insomuch that while he was alive he had the esteem and applause both of kings and of the multitudes, and now he is dead he retains a remembrance that will never fail." Eastern tradition says he died and was buried at Shushan. A Jewish rabbi, named Benjamin of Tudela, records that a river divided the city of Shushan, and as that part of the city where the remains of Daniel were interred was more prosperous than the other, the success was attributed to the possession of the body of the prophet. After considerable strife both parties were appeased, by the decision that the coffin should be deposited alternately every year on either side. This arrangement continued for a considerable time, till the King of Persia interfered, and decreed that the body of Daniel should be suspended from the very middle of the bridge which united the two parts of the city of Shushan; and "the coffin of Daniel is suspended from the bridge unto this very day," says the rabbi, who wrote early in the twelfth century. However much or little of truth there may be in the stories current concerning the last days of Daniel, they certainly indicate the esteem, the reverence, the love in which he was held-for all the traditional allusions place him before the minds of men as one of marked integrity and conspicuous piety. Holy, happy, honoured man of God! Thou hast passed away to thy rest. Would that we could do justice to thy worth! This we would do-imitate thy pre-eminent piety, thy stirring principle, thine unconquerable faith, thine unshaken conscientiousness!

Brothers, I point to this sainted servant of the Lord, and I beg you note, particularly, the one conspicuous trait in his character—his conscientiousness. You will discover it in him when a youth, and you will trace it woven into his entire history. On his first arrival in

Babylon it led him to make a bold stand against the luxurious indulgence of a heathen court. young man placed in his position now would say, "It is a small matter whether I eat and drink of the same provisions as the king's court, and for the sake of not appearing singular or discourteous, I will quietly eat and drink what is laid before me." But Daniel did not so; he had scruples of conscience; he desired to keep his conscience tender and electrically quick, and so in this apparently small matter he formed a firm decision and adhered to it. It was by thus being careful in relation to the smaller obligations of life that he became heroic in the greater. And you will do well to observe this throughout life. The man who is not conscientious when dealing with farthings, will not be so when trading to the extent of millions. The man whose conscience will allow him to indulge in falsehood to serve one purpose, will not shrink from lying under any circum-The man who can palliate evil in one form, will grow to excuse it in all forms. Beware of the man or woman whose life-barque is not steered by the rudder of conscience! Keep out of the road of that person who rides recklessly, without the bit and bridle of true principle in small things. On each of the three occasions that Daniel was summoned into the royal presence to interpret visions and signs, you know how faithfully Though it was his duty to pronounce a doom against a guilty monarch, he hesitated not to do it. waited not to discuss the prudence of doing this or saying that. He conferred not with flesh and blood, but with unruffled dignity spake right out what duty compelled him to declare. So when the great trial of his life came, and the decree was made known to him which

prohibited prayer to God, he did not have recourse to the subterfuge of inward prayer in order to escape death. With persevering consistency he drew nigh to God, as was his custom. He pursued the line which an enlightened conscience marked out for him, and left the results in the hand of the Eternal. Thus it was that Daniel was honoured of God and man. He knew it not, but every step he took in the path of conscientiousness, though it often appeared to be a step down-hill, was one nearer the towering summits of the sunny hills of fame, and happiness, and heaven. Every resolute adherence to godly principle rendered him more ready for the bright and beautiful revelations which he was favoured to receive and hand down to posterity.

Young men, I would to God I could foster in your minds a deeper longing after such a characteristic. Ay, I would that not you only, but all who hear me, coveted most earnestly this unspeakably precious gift. are days when there is far too much pandering to the wishes of one and succumbing before the influence of another. What our religion most needs in these days is inflexible backbone. The professors of discipleship to Jesus are too frequently weak, sickly, sentimental, cringing folks. They associate with men of the world, not as unswerving heroes, but as vacillating cowards. They pass in the world like men who feel they ought to apologise for being Christians. They appear afraid to utter their own heartfelt convictions; and if by uttering them they create a little opposition, they quickly retract their words or retire in craven silence lest peace should be disturbed. Sirs, that dilettante life is not the life I would wish any of you to cultivate. is not by such men that the Kingdom of the Redeemer is to make conspicuous progress. It is not from among such poltroons that we must look for champions of the truth. It is not in the company of such recreants that you are to be trained for the hard fighting which awaits the Church in coming years. The quicker you begin to cultivate a rigid and undeviating attachment to the dictates of a devout and enlightened conscience, the better for you, for the Church, and for the world.

But let me caution you. Let me point out what conscientiousness in Daniel had to contend with, for the same difficulties will be found in your way.

Civil authority was against him. When as a youth he objected to the food, and determined not to "defile" himself. Ashpenaz intimated that it would be at the peril of his own life to allow the Hebrew exile exemption from the king's directions. So when the statute prohibiting prayer to God was issued, it came with the weight of the monarch's authority. But in neither instance was Daniel moved from his righteous purpose. Like his three Hebrew companions, who would not bow down to the gigantic golden idol which Nebuchadnezzar erected. Daniel made a bold and determined stand for liberty of conscience. Whilst willing to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, he was supremely anxious to render unto God the things that are God's. So, brethren, it may happen to you, as it has to very many in our day and generation, that civil authority may stand in the way of your conscientious action. In such a case we bid you seek strength from God and gallantly go forward. Draw a broad line of distinction between civil and spiritual claims, and let not the one trench upon the other. If any man, be he monarch or magistrate, require you to do what conscience tells you is opposed to the revealed will of Heaven, then remember the words of Peter and John, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." "We ought to obey God rather than man." On this lofty principle all the heroic souls who suffered for truth's sake have acted. The conflict between the secular and the spiritual has ever existed, more or less. The two great forces, State law and spiritual life have been face to face in most generations. The blessed liberty we enjoy to-day we owe to the kingly men who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, in order to establish the truth, that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom, having its empire in the mind of the individual. Dear sirs, let not this Scriptural principle, which has been contended for at such a weighty cost, ever slip from your grasp. Let no legislative actions have a moment's dominion over your conscience. Let none, however elevated and influential, intrude on the consecrated domain of your religious thought and action.

"Let Cæsar's due be ever paid
To Cæsar and his throne,
But consciences and souls were made
For God, and God alone."

Friendly obligations were against Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was his benefactor. He most generously educated him for three years in princely style, and provided bountifully from his own royal board, and yet Daniel could not surrender the claims of conscience. Darius, too, had elevated the prophet to the first place next his throne, and had given many indications of the

royal favour; and yet Daniel would not submit to the decree. Ah, one of the most trying experiences of life to an ingenuous mind is to act counter to the wishes of those who have been kind and generous. seasons of painful necessity are sometimes the lot of God's people. I have no doubt that Daniel felt it a trial to be obliged to oppose the wishes of these royal I have no doubt that some said to him, "What, Daniel, are you so ungrateful to your benefactor as to decline to accede to his wish in so little a matter?" But conscience forbade Daniel's doing other The friendship of God was better far than than he did. that of man. He must do right, even at the sacrifice of friends. So, dear sirs, I doubt not but that in the course of your experience the obligations of friendship will be often arrayed against your conscience. Your companions will say to you, "Oh, don't say that; don't do that; you will alienate your very best supporters. Have not A. and B. always befriended you? Are you not now very largely dependent upon them? It will be madness to thwart their wishes—suicidal to say 'No' to their requests." In such a case I beg you heed not the voice of the tempter. Rather hear the voice of the All-powerful One saying, "Them that honour Me I will honour." Dare to do the thing that conscience and God tell you is right at all consequences. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me."

Prevalence of custom was against Daniel. It was customary for all beneath the royal roof to partake of the king's meat and wine. It was a fact that throughout the kingdom of Darius men readily obeyed his

decree. But this was not a satisfactory reason for compliance to the mind of Daniel. Some said then, as they say now, "Why should you affect to be better and wiser than others? Why should you stand alone? Surely you can fall in with what is the universal practice." But Daniel did not. He was

"Faithful found

Among the faithless, faithful he
Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Mistaken, unseduced, unterrified;
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single."

Let us imitate him. Oh, it is nothing to you, my friend, that all men may lie; you are commanded to speak the truth. It is nothing to you that trickery and dishonesty prevail; you are directed to provide things honest in the sight of all men. It is nothing to you that Christian professors generally are lax and indifferent in relation to earthly pleasures; you are exorted to be not conformed to this world—to love not the world. It is nothing to you that men—professedly Christian men -look with such partiality upon sin; you are implored to hate sin and to avoid the very appearance of evil. I beg you in all matters where truth, and conscience, and Christ are concerned, there dare to be singular, if need be-dare to be steadfast and immovable, even though alone. in things in which no principle is involved—things that touch not conscience—you can afford, if you desire, to conform to the prevailing usages of society.

Then, also, the prospect of punishment was against

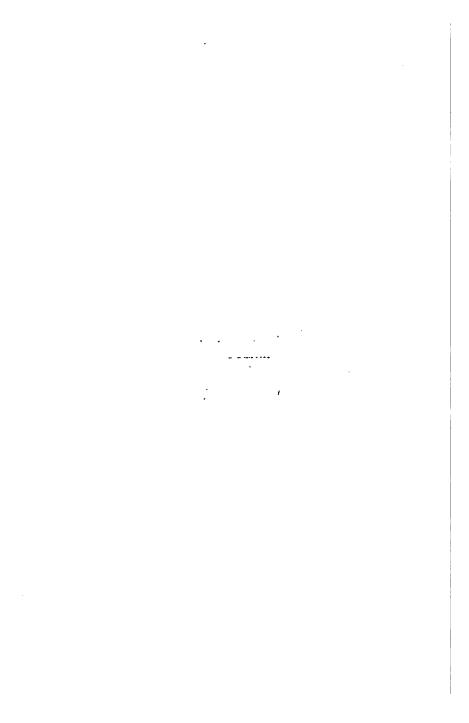
Daniel. He at no time knew what would be the full consequences of his faithful discharge of duty, and when he obeyed not the law of Darius he saw clearly no alternative but the den of lions. But he rose superior to all earthly considerations. He preferred to die for God than live denying God. His eye of faith pierced, in its keen vision, beyond the clouds of present trial, and discerned the supernal glory that awaits the righteous. With the expectation of Divine commendation and eternal peace, he could endure for a little the opposition of the world and the agonies of death from the lion's The penalties to which you will be subjected for conscience sake are comparatively light—not worthy of being mentioned alongside of the sufferings God's people of old have endured. Noble armies of men have felt the strong arm of the law depriving them of liberty and life; but to that you are an entire stranger. Polycarp of Smyrna, Irenœus of Lyons, Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Luther, Melancthon, Zuinglius, Knox, Latimer, Ridley, Bunyan, Baxter, Howe, the Waldenses, Albigenses, Hugenots, Lollards, Covenanters, and many, many more braved the gnashing teeth and imprecating voices of enraged multitudes, and endured untold privation and pain because conscientious. But what are likely to be your punishments? these: the loss of a few professed friends, the sneer of ungodly men, the loss of a few customers, and the consequent reduction, to the amount of a few pounds, on your yearly income; the sacrifice of a situation, and a little inconvenience till you secure another; or, at the worst, abandonment by your relatives and necessary dependence upon Providence and your own energies. These things may be disagreeable to human nature; in

their way they are trials; but, oh! what are they compared with what our forefathers endured for conscience and for Christ? Can you exercise no selfdenial? Is your religion of so little value to you that you cannot make some surrender to retain it? Christ so little loved and prized by you that you are not willing to submit to a brief season of discomfort for His sake? Are those noble and enduring principles for which martyrs have bled and died of so little importance that you will not risk some of your ease, indulgence, and wealth for their maintenance? I beseech you play the man! In these days, when so few tribulations are allotted us, when the cross we have to carry is so light, and the sacrifices we have to make are so small, let us not be slow to exercise conscientiousness despite all difficulties. Forget not the words of the poet philosopher, Lucretius, who says, "The scourge, the executioner, the dungeon, the pitchy tunic, even though these be absent, yet the guilty mind with anticipating terror applies the goad and scorches with its blows." Though you may be spared the outward and terrible visitations which were the lot of many saints of old, yet if you will not live conscientiously—if you will not follow the spirit and letter of the law of Christ-you will have the stingings of a condemning conscience here, and a sad, sad reckoning hereafter. Hark to the sweet, soft, entreating voice of the Divine Master sounding down the centuries, "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

But think what is gained by a life of conscientious devotion to Jesus. The soul dwells in perpetual summer. The aromatic flowers of grace grow fairer and abound. The mind is sheltered from petty cares that hourly annoy the inconsistent man. The past presents no ghost-like forms of evil to scare, and the future is bright with the dawning of an eternal day of honour and happiness. The whole life is admired by onlookers because of the serene chastity and beauty it displays. The companionship of the "Prince of the kings of the earth" is daily enjoyed, and when the eyes close to things terrestrial, and the beatific glories of the other world burst upon the rapt vision, the memory of the conscientious man is blessed, his influence for good is abiding in all generations.

LECTURE IX.

THE RICH RULER; OR, SUBSERVIENCY TO WEALTH.



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HEMICAL analysis—or the art of resolving compounds into the various constituent elements—is one of the most important branches of the science of chemistry, and one which demands the strictest discretion and vigilance. Chief among the apparatus employed by the analyst are tests, by which the presence and predominance of acids or alkalies are quickly discovered. In religion there is a work for every man in relation to his motives, affections, and thoughts as important as analysis to the man of science. We are required to know ourselves, to look within and turn over the pages of memory's memoranda, to introvert our gaze and mark what rises and rests in the soul, what effects the constant residents or flitting visitors of our minds produce upon our being, how far the things seen and temporal touch and govern our conduct in relation to the unseen and eternal. are asked to consider and scrutinise all the convictions. inclinations, aversions, loves, and longings that are within us.

That we may thoroughly perform this work, which is the solemn business of human life, the Divine Arbiter has appointed us *tests*. To our first parents in the fair, fresh, fruitful paradise the positive command concerning the fruit of one tree was the test. To the chosen Israelites the chequered dealings of Providence were a test. for, said the Eternal One, these were "to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep My commandments or not." But the greatest and best of all tests is that furnished the world by the coming, conduct, character, crucifixion, and coronation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Simeon truly spake when he said, "Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." It is no marvel, then, that the Great Teacher ever and anon during His ministrations made demands of men which became "discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart." No marvel that He called to duties which were crucial, and by which the real position, power, and propensity of the individual were disclosed. Of one such instance I now desire to speak. It is a case which so impressed the minds of the evangelistic attendants that each of the Synoptists portray the incident.

A young man of high position, of prepossessing appearance, of promising talents, of unblemished character, and of great wealth, who had, notwithstanding his youth, risen to the responsible and dignified post of ruler in a synagogue, was impressed with the idea that Jesus could disclose to him some secret by which the life eternal may be secured. Hearing that Christ was leaving that part of the country, and anxious not to let the opportunity wholly pass, he came with great haste and eagerness to the feet of Jesus, and, paying the customary salutation exclaimed, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The simple and brief direction at first given was "Keep

the commandments;" and when, with an air of surprise, the youth inquired "which?" he was referred to the sixth, seventh, eight, ninth, and fifth. "Master," replied the young man, "all these have I observed from my youth." But the Lord, knowing that all the youth's obedience had been only external conformity to the letter of the law, resolved, by a crucial test, to show the absence of true religion in his heart. "One thing thou lackestgo and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me." This the young ruler deemed too severe a test. abandon all the tangible wealth of time in order to procure the invisible riches of eternity was, in his estimation, too hard a bargain. So, with a beclouded brow and a grief-stricken heart he turned back. We read no more of him in the Gospel narratives. Let us hope he turned to Jesus afterwards, and that there is nothing more than poetic imagination in the language of Dante when he describes the fiends of hell, and says there was among them "the shade of him who made, through cowardice, the great refusal."

It was no mean trial to which the rich ruler was subjected. Many a man who speaks scornfully of the youth's conduct would do precisely the same if placed in similar circumstances. What would be the reply of the best young man we know if he were asked to surrender at once all the possessions and prospects which brighten his days? What would he say if he were directed to part with that spacious house which his father bequeathed him, to sell that extensive estate which his ancestry so cultivated, to dispose of those valuable paintings, those standard books, and all the choice furniture with which the mansion is stocked, and then

give the entire proceeds of the sale for the benefit of the poor? What would he think if he were summoned to make himself a pauper in order to please Christ? Would he unhesitatingly obey? The things he counts fascinating gain would be abandon as insufferable dross for the sake of Jesus? Would he not turn away sorrowfully? Would he not look lingeringly toward the spot around which so many memories cluster, and the treasures which were the accumulation of years? Would he not sooner or later refuse, and that though he is acquainted with the fact that Christ sacrificed Himself for his sake? Then, how can we so hastily condemn the young ruler who knew comparatively little of the Saviour? The trial of his faith and affection was incomparably greater than that which any young man now could experience. Jesus was a poor man-a poor man, despised and rejected by His own people—a despised destitute man, surrounded only by indigent and illiterate men; and it was to follow this "Man of Sorrows," about whom there were such conflicting opinions, that he was directed to sell all that he had. Oh, let not one of us in these favoured times, who is not prepared to make the sacrifice the young ruler could not make, throw one stone at him. There was a great deal about the young man we shall do well to imitate. His anxiety about religion was admirable—he came running to Christ. Many in these days wait till sickness or approaching death drives them, and then they come with no marked alacrity. His courage deserves attention; he did not come under cover of night, like Nicodemus, but openly and unconcealed. His humility is suggestive; rich, noble, influential, and respected, he nevertheless falls on his knees in the

presence of the man who had nowhere to lay His His reverence, too, must not be overlooked; whilst some derisively spake of Jesus as the "carpenter's son," and others pronounced the Lord a "glutton and a wine-bibber," he approached Him with the epithet "good"-"Good Master." Indeed, there was so much of excellency in the man that it is written, "Jesus beholding, loved him "-felt specially drawn towards him, and sensible of peculiar interest in him. like many other young men of the present day, amiable, virtuous, intelligent, orthodox, respected, beloved, but not the partaker of saving grace. He possessed all but the one thing needful. He held a responsible office, he was esteemed by all his associates, he maintained a blameless reputation, but he was devoid of true love to Christ. He did what was right, but he did it from a wrong motive. True, deep, yearning affection for the Saviour was not the constraining principle of his action. Hence when the testing command was given, he failed. His heart was wedded to his earthly possessions. was under the spell of the world's enchantment—so he went away sorrowful, for he was very rich. He came to Christ hastily, but he departed from Him heavily. He could not submit to the condition of discipleship Jesus laid down because he was enamoured of his wealth. The great Teacher saw that gold had the place in the young man's heart which ought alone to be consecrated to God-that he thought more of his silver than the Saviour—that he valued the surroundings of the present time before the treasures of eternity.

"For mark the change; thus spake the Lord,
'Come, part with earth for heaven to-day.'
The youth, astonished at the word,
In silent sadness went his way."

What a golden opportunity he missed! If hoary hairs crowned his head—if he lived to see his children and his grandchildren—if he took the young upon his knee and talked to them of the past, what stress would he place upon his bye-gone folly, his ill-judged choice of this world, and refusal of the Saviour's love; and how earnestly, methinks, would he beg them to seek the Lord while He may be found.

Alas! my brethren, that this young ruler should have so many imitators. We see them day by day. We encounter them in the highways of our cities, we meet them in the retired and shady retreats of our villages, we mingle with them in our appointed places of worship. There are men so subservient to wealth that they will sacrifice their ease, their reputation, their friends, their principles, their all, in order to gain and retain it. You will discover in the world some weak-minded men who will not speak their own convictions because they are afraid of offending a somebody who happens to be rich -that is subserviency to wealth. You will find other men who will do the meanest tricks, and expose themselves to the reprobation of all manly men, simply to keep the favour and patronage of a relative or friend who has property—that is subserviency to wealth. You will encounter others, again, who have not a minute to spare for any social movement or benevolent purpose; from the first day of January till the last day of December, they are intently set on money-making—that is subserviency to wealth. You will meet with others, again, who go farther; they will stoop to dishonest ways, will lie, defraud, gamble, aye, Judas-like, will sell their very Lord for gain—that is subserviency to wealth. When a man permits worldly possessions to control his

thoughts and actions—when he allows money to become his master rather than be his servant—when he cannot give freedom to his affections and energies in any good cause without asking "What shall I gain or lose by it?"—that man is in bondage to the love of riches. Pope has well portrayed the character of such a man in the words:—

"'I give and I devise' (old Euclid said And sighed) 'my lands and tenements to Ned. 'Your money, sir?' 'My money, sir? What all? Why, if I must' (then wept) 'I give it Paul.' 'The manor, Sir?' 'The manor! hold!' he cried, 'Not that—I cannot part with that'—and died."

Now, my dear young brethren, just buckling on the untried harness for the great and glorious crusade of life, I am anxious to caution you against this love of Mammon. I do not want to deter you in your lawful and praiseworthy efforts to succeed in life. Every man is in duty bound to do the best he can for himself and those who are closely dependent upon him. But, remember, every man in so doing is required to run to the goal of success by the path God's Holy Word has mapped out; and one of the great demands of revealed truth is this—that your mind shall not be unduly engrossed, your affections not slavishly enlisted by worldly gain. Directly your search for money interferes with your spiritual life, your religious duties, your social obligations, it becomes an appalling evil in the sight of God. Directly riches bar the way to your finding and following Immanuel they are a cramping, crushing curse. Let me, then, remind you that we have nothing to say against money in the abstract. "Of course, circumstanced as we are in the life that now is, money is to each of us an absolute necessity. We must have some of it, or something of what it represents. So far, therefore, it might be said to be good-good in itselfbecause it is a good thing to have it, or so much of it as our necessities require. The Scriptures themselves do not condemn riches in the abstract. It is not said that 'money is the root of all evil,' but 'the love of it.' True, riches may be a temptation like anything else that is a power for good or evil; but they may also be an aid to virtue—they may stimulate to fidelity by deepening the sense of moral obligation." What I am supremely anxious to write indelibly upon your minds, dear sirs, is this-that it rests wholly with you whether wealth shall be a bane or a blessing to you; that it depends entirely upon your state of mind in relation to riches whether they hinder your progress towards heaven, or help you to glorify your Lord. If you live to accumulate money; if your thoughts are day and night occupied with schemes for getting or keeping resources; if you trust in your worldly possessions; if, in a word, you are in a condition of subserviency to wealth, you will be unhappy, restless, and Christless. The colossal figure of Mammon standing between you and the Divine Sun of Righteousness will throw a cold, dense, deadly shadow upon your heart—a shadow so deep and deleterious that no spiritual fruits or flowers will ever flourish therein. Grovelling in the sordid dust of earth, your vision will never be cheered by the beatific disclosures of the fair heavens above you. And though you may have very little of this world's goods -though you may indeed be in frequent difficulties for the want of money, yet if you are the subject of an

all-absorbing solicitude, if you permit your mind to be tossed hither and thither by the rough billows of excessive anxiety and fear-if life is allowed to be filled up with the oft-recurring questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" you will in like manner rob yourself of unspeakably precious light and comfort which true religion can afford. "The cares of this world—the deceitfulness of riches—and the lusts of other things," are the thorns which grow up and choke the Word, so that the good seed of the kingdom is lost. Andrew Fuller, when on one occasion he accompanied a friend to the Bank, was shown some ingots of gold. After balancing one in his hand thoughtfully, he laid it down with the remark, "How much better is it to have this in the hand than in the heart!" My brothers, see to it that if riches increase you do not set your heart Beware of covetousness, and remember upon them. you cannot serve God and Mammon. Whilst you trust not in uncertain riches, see to it that you do not worry yourself about their acquisition. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and other, minor, subordinate, fleeting things shall be added unto you. But if you allow your heart to be occupied by the love of this world and its possessions, the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God will remove farther off from you.

How many are the warnings given us in Scripture against subserviency to wealth! How striking are the illustrations afforded us of the evils of coveting riches! Ahab envied Naboth his possessions, and you know the issue. Judas thought of the pieces of silver, and to gain these betrayed the world's Redeemer. Ananias and Sapphira, for the sake of filthy lucre, told a fatal false-

hood. Demas, from love to the present world, forsook his bosom friend and his position as a witness for Christ. Simon Magus, though a professed believer and a baptised disciple, was so enamoured of riches that Peter, addressing him, said, "Thy money perish with thee; thy heart is not right in the sight of God," "Like Milton's angel, who, even in heaven, was always far more intent on its golden pavement, its rich and precious gems, than in sympathy with its ideas, services, and song," Simon Magus, though numbered among the early Christians, was too much absorbed with thoughts of gold. Nor is it without a solemn intention that the Great Teacher gives us the parables of the sower -the rich fool-and Dives and Lazarus. By each of these He conveys some momentous lessons on the subject of our treatment of this world's goods.

Ah! sirs, if we have been observant in our reading and experience of life, we must have been a thousand times impressed with the Saviour's words, "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." We have witnessed the successful man grow proud, and yield to self-indulgence. We have seen him quickly surrounded by a host of flatterers, whilst a friend who would be a faithful reprover has seldom ventured to approach him. We have observed his heart grow strong in prejudice against the precepts of our holy religion which require self-denial and true humilty. found him increasingly engaged with the affairs of earth till Mammon has been worshipped instead of his Maker, and all desire after the things of eternity has passed away. You may possess the wealth of Crossus, the last king of Lydia, and yet, like Crœsus, you shall be exposed to the vicissitudes of life and deprived of true happiness if on riches you depend. What though you are so abounding in this world's goods that you can, like Caligula of old, spend £80,000 on one supper—or, like Esopus, spend that amount on a single dish—or, like Cleopatra, dissolve a pearl of that value to be swallowed by a friend, you may yet be the most miserable man on earth. True happiness is not at all dependent upon one's worldly possessions. Riches will not necessarily purchase confidence, sympathy, affection, love to God, and hope of heaven; and these are the perennial springs of joy and peace. The sense of adoption into God's family is worth mines of golden ore. The man who can look up to yonder skies and sing—

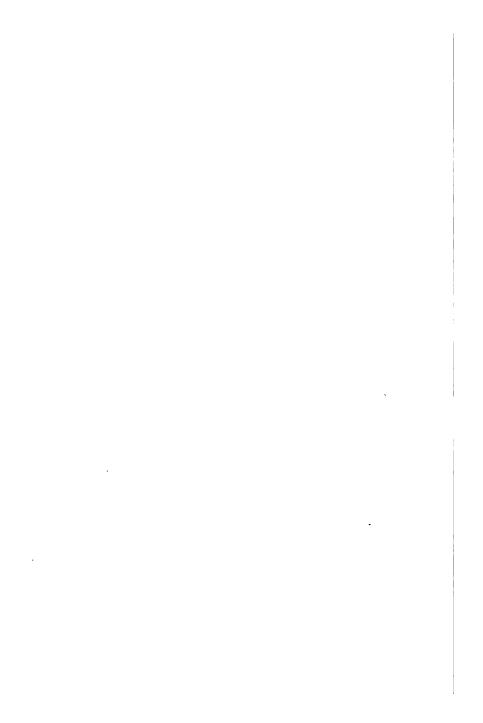
"There is my house and portion fair, My treasure and my heart are there."

is richer than the man who sways an imperial sceptre. The fact is, the ideal is far more powerful than the real. A man may be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and yet life be an intolerable burden; whilst outside his noble mansion may lie a shoeless, shivering, starving pauper, who despite his surroundings, may dwell in heavenly places with Christ, and have a contented mind, which is a continual feast. We have frequently very mistaken ideas of true wealth. Men say that A. died "worth" so many thousands, as though his soul were to be estimated in the other world by what his poor body gained in this; or as though in the land of spirits he would have so much capital with which to start. He is deemed rich by the world who has large landed estates and a handsome sum at his bankers. But that man is pronounced rich by

God who lays up treasure in heaven. Men say, "Get, keep, amass, double, quadruple your substance;" but the Lord says, "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." St. Edmund of Canterbury was accustomed to leave his money loose upon his window-sill, and whilst sprinkling it over with earth, he would say, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Of the philosopher Crates it is narrated that he converted his whole estate into pieces of gold and silver, and then flung the entire amount into the ocean, saying, "Away, ye sordid cares! I drown you, that you may not drown me." Better would it be for many in these days if they regarded wealth with similar feelings! Better that you, sir, gave away all you have than suffer yourself to become a mere machine—a machine worked not by steam, but by spirit power, for no nobler purpose than that of scraping, scraping, scraping together gold dust!

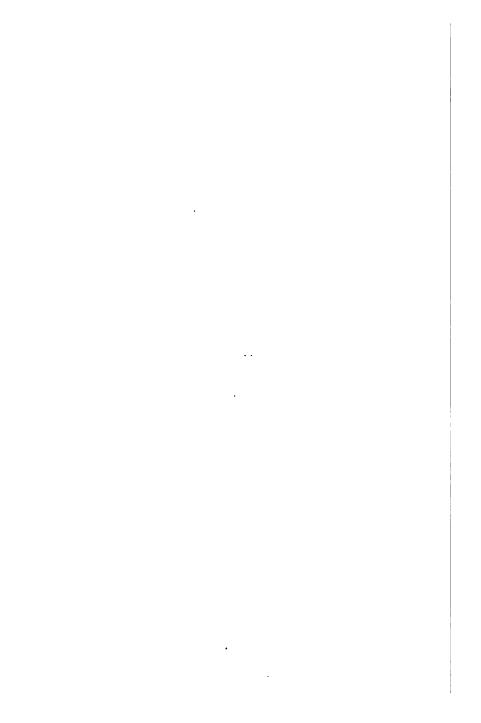
You remember how Ignatius Loyola, the apostle of voluntary poverty, followed Francis Xavier with the question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Xavier was descended from a noble family in Navarre. He was rich, he was influential, he was eloquent. But Loyola, who also was the son of a Spanish nobleman, but had given up all his possessions for the good of the Church, was resolved upon winning Xavier to the So when he walked out amid the beauties Jesuit party. of creation, when he rested quietly in his own chamber, and when he had finished, amid applause, some of his oratorical addresses, Loyola would interject the query, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" His earnestness and perseverance were successful, and Xavier was induced to enter the priesthood and become the disciple of Ignatius Loyola. So, my dear sirs, would I have this one question ring in your ears, and reign in your mind. You who are so earnest in your search for money; you who, for gold, put aside serious questions of eternity; you who allow the whole weary week to be filled with anxious care about temporals—care which even intrudes into the Sabbath and the sanctuary, I pray you resolve this problem—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

If God has gifted you with this world's substance if He has smiled upon your efforts and filled your barns with plenty, then remember you are but a steward. Employ your riches in the service of God and man. Lay your possessions on the Lord's altar. Put Christ in your will. Use your wealth as you would use golden grain-scatter it; and it will produce a glorious harvest for you. But if you are commencing life with just enough to make provision for your recurring necessities, then I beg you, young man, begin life aright. Do not make riches the goal of your existence. Do not let the desire for transitory gain be supreme in your heart. But listen, and obey the voice of Jesus when He follows you with the counsel, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Remember that precious One who, though infinitely rich, for your sake became exceptionally poor, that through His unmerited poverty you may be made eternally rich; and constrained by love to Him, be prepared to leave all to follow Him!



LECTURE X.

THE WIDOW'S SON; OR, SUBJECTION TO WOE.



LECTURE X.

THE WIDOW'S SON; OR, SUBJECTION TO WOE.

THERE is one personal Being who orders and controls all things. He speaks agencies into operation when, where, and for so long as He pleases. reigns throughout all His kingdoms—nature, providence, and grace. Neither the world nor they that dwell therein are left as a ship on the ocean to the mercy of circumstances. All things are under His unerring jurisdiction, from the ministrations of an archangel to the movements of the ephemera floating in the summer breeze. In the administration of the affairs of this world He is everywhere and in everything, great and small, proximate and remote. A briny tear cannot trickle from the eye of childhood, nor silvery hair drop from the brow of old age, nor wild bird fall before the aim of the sportsman without His notice. And if objects so small are observed by Him, much more may we expect Him to be cognisant of those vicissitudes to which are linked results the most serious and lasting-events which concern the deathless spirits of men for whom the whole world was created as a temporary stage. His hand is everywhere if it be anywhere, and the laws of nature are only the expressions of His imperial will, self-imposed methods of working, not restraints upon His

sovereign power. Yes, natural causes are to Him like the tools in the hand of a skilful artificer, or a pencil in the fingers of an experienced draughtsman. Without any violence to them, He can use them as He pleases, according to the character to be fashioned, and work to be accomplished.

"Safe in the hand of one disposing power,
Or in the natal or the mortal hour;
All nature is but art unknown to thee,
All chance, discretion which thou canst not see.
All discord, harmony not understood,
All partial evil, universal good,
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear—whatever is, is right!"

Such thoughts as these force themselves on our attention as we think of the touching narrative of the widow's son—a narrative of human woe and Divine compassion. You are acquainted with the particulars as recorded by the Evangelist (Luke vii. 11—15).

Leaving, Capernaum, where, the day before, He had healed the centurion's servant, Jesus proceeded south to Jerusalem. In accordance with oriental custom, He started in the cool hours of early morning. At that period of His ministry He journeyed not alone. In addition to His disciples, there were crowds of happy and hopeful attendants. Picturesquely nestled among the abounding foliage of the hill-slopes of Little Hermon was a city appropriately termed "Nain," which means the fair, the beautiful. For that spot Immanuel and His followers steadily made, intending there to rest amid the enchanting forms of nature. Soon after noon the joyous procession neared the lovely city. The noontide

heat had tried them. The "beaded sweat" was thick upon the brow, and the "white dust of travel" lay plentifully upon the sandals. Footsore and weary they toiled up the narrow and steep ascent leading to the city gates, doubtless anticipating the rest and refreshment so close at hand. But just before they entered they saw another procession issuing from the city.

"The broad gate
Swang on its hinges, and the Roman bent
His spear-point downwards as the bearers pass'd,
Bending beneath their burden. There was one—
Only one mourner. Close behind the bier,
Crumpling the pall up in her wither'd hands,
Follow'd an aged woman. Her short steps
Faltered with weakness, and a broken moan
Fell from her lips, thicken'd convulsively
As her heart bled afresh. The pitying crowd
Follow'd apart, but no one spoke to her.
She had no kinsman. She had lived alone—
A widow with one son. He was her all—
The only tie she had in the wide world—
And he was dead. They could not comfort her."

The whole scene was at once understood by the sympathetic Saviour. He saw the terrible sense of loneliness and loss which pressed like a mountain weight upon that poor widow's heart. He knew with what a wrench the ties of endearing affection had been severed. He fathomed the sea of that mother's troubles, and numbered each tear-drop as it furrowed the mourner's cheek. At once He paused, and, that not one unnecessary pang may disturb the spirit, He said to the mother, "Weep not." Having stilled the riven heart, He approached the bier, and as He touched it He said,

in tender but authoritative tones:—"Young man, I say, unto thee, Arise!" That omnific utterance rang through the spirit world, and instantly the corpse was reanimated, and the youth arose and spoke.

Has it struck you that in each of the three resurrections from the dead, effected by the supreme power of Jesus, the subject was young? The daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, was only twelve years of age. The widow's son of Nain was but a youth; and, from what we read of Lazarus of Bethany, I think we may reasonably infer that he was a young man. Very suggestive is this thought. It teaches us that Immanuel had deep impressions of the preciousness and lofty capabilities of life. He did not reanimate the aged. He did not call back again those who had well nigh completed the allotted years of man. He knew that with such the struggles of life's day had become burdensome, and the possibility of their achieving signal triumphs were very few. But he raised the young, before whom life was presenting its powerful attractions; the young, whose habits were only in the bud; the young, whose minds were like wax to receive and like marble to retain impressions; the young, who could, by continuance in well-doing, accomplish wondrous tasks before the winter of old age mantled their path. But the fact that they were young persons on whom the God-man exerted His miraculous power of resurrection also suggests another thought. It reminds us that youth is subject to woe—that none can claim exemption from sorrow and suffering on the ground of juvenility or inexperience.

The grand old Bible says, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," and the young as well as

the aged are embraced in the sweeping application of those words. Some, indeed, commence their troublous times more early in life than others. Some find misfortune at the foot of the hill, others meet it midway, others again, at the summit. Some encounter high-rolling adverse waves just as their barque is launched on the life-ocean, others sail for years ere a storm lash the sea to foam and fill the heart with fear, whilst others again are overtaken by the lowering cloud and boisterous wind just as they are entering the desired haven for which they have been perseveringly and patiently making. With some life is like a river which, starting amid rugged mountains, leaps from precipice to precipice with melancholy roar, then, miles away from its source, emerges into a sunny fertile plain, and runs on calmly to the ocean. With others it is like a spring bubbling up laughingly amid gay flowers and green moss, flowing on gently and gracefully through beauteous surroundings, till, when greatly increased in volume and force, it encounters obstacles in some gloomy ravine, and at last falls angrily into some deep cold lake. But all of us must expect to be confronted by sorrow. In every man's history there is a crucial season long or short—a time when the passionless hand of Providence weighs the coin-character-which we have been stamping and burnishing, and either permits it to pass current or condemns it to be melted again in the furnace.

Perhaps I speak to some young man who is just struggling with sorrow in some form. You know what is the source of your grief. It may be that you have been thwarted in your worldly plans—disappointed where you reposed implicit confidence—deceived by

some who promised most solemnly, so that now your faith in man is dry, and friendship seems to you a hollow, obsolete, delusive name. Or, it may be you have been called to part with some fondly-loved one-you have just returned from the open grave of a venerated father, or from the sick couch of a loved mother, or from bidding "adieu" for the last time to an affectionate sister who was the clinging companion of your youthful days, and the tears still orb themselves in your eyes, for a heavy burden depresses your spirits. Or, it may be that the same icy hand which stretched the widow's son in death is feeling after your heart-stringsdisease has lodged its poisoned arrows in your frame, weakness prostrates you, and sad symptoms of early decay darken your days. From some cause known to vourself and God vou are subjected to woe. My dear brother, I have a message from God unto thee. I want specially to speak to you; and, strange as it may sound in your ears, I desire to write one thought upon your heart, and that is this: - That sorrow, ever a grand, sublime, blessed thing, may be specially so to you—that whilst there are precious joys ever to be drawn from the well of tears, those may be most precious which are drawn in early life—that "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth."

Sorrow in youth gives correct views of life. When we begin to observe and think for ourselves all is novelty to us, and every object seems to be an object of delight. To the child this world appears to be the empire of pleasure. All things promise fairly, and the sanguine heart prophecies nothing but smooth things. The morning of life's day is sunny, and hence it is supposed the whole day will be filled with brilliancy. The bud is

promising, and it is inferred that the flower will be alike With such sanguine hopes the youth grows beautiful. in years. He is disposed to avoid those who are in trouble, and to laugh at those who are not successful in the life-struggle, as though it were a man's own fault to be in any kind of adversity. In the elasticity of his youthful spirits he flatters himself that he knows better than his seniors—that he only needs to be a little older, and he will show his friends how to get on in life. He expresses his surprise, it may be his disgust, when a Christian man or minister condemns certain worldly pleasures and pursuits. In all cases of right and wrong he thinks he sees clearly the only correct way of settling the dispute. He is ready with words of scorn for the man who differs from him, even though that man may have had years of experience before the lad was wrapped in swaddling clothes. Thus living—if unvisited by sorrow—he becomes an easy prey to the tempter. The youthful energy and hopefulness which should be preserved under repression for future emergencies are drawn off, like so much electricity, by the world's conductors; and by and by he wakes up to a sense of terrible annoyance, vexation, and chagrin. When a large, and the best share of life is gone he becomes sensible that the paths of men lie through clouds as well as sunshine, and that it is not wisdom to act as if unchequered prosperity would always be the portion.

But let such a youth be exposed to anxiety, to affliction, to woe of some order, and see how altered is his estimate of men and things. His thoughtlessness is cured, his frivolity is checked, his buoyancy is repressed, and his expressions are modified. He is able to carry the cup of worldly possessions or prospects with a steadier

hand. He runs the way that Providence has appointed with a fleeter and firmer step. Just as a driver will sometimes give his horse the lash that the animal's attention may be drawn from some object at which he is likely to shy, so God in His mercy lays the rod of correction upon youth that rocks in his road, which threaten to be his ruin, may be safely and speedily passed. Oh! I have known young men who were once shunned as conceited, boisterous, trifling, and impudent fellows, so changed under the influence of sorrow, that they have become judicious, steady, respectful com-Their counsel has been sought and their friendship courted. They have progressed in life as they never would have done if their views of life had not been chastened: and in the hours of their triumph and abundance they could look to heaven and say :---

"Amidst my list of blessings infinite, Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled; For all I bless Thee—most for the severe."

Sorrow in youth establishes the character. There is no school like that of adversity. In it have graduated the noblest and most perfect characters the world has ever known. But for the stern discipline of sorrow, we should have lost some of the sweetest and strongest influences which now bless our race. Ay, the God-man was made perfect through suffering. It was the opposition He encountered and the agony He endured that fitted Him for the constant exercise of benignant tenderness and compassionating regard. He attained official perfection by the inconceivable tempest which swept over His heart; and we attain moral and spiritual

strength by the Atlantic waves of trouble that beat upon our spirits.

Naturalists discover the most brilliantly coloured plants on the highest mountains. Exposed to and nurtured by the keenest winds and wildest storms, have sprung up lichens and mosses of the most rich and attractive hues. So on the bleak hills of adversity, a man's character is more mellowed and beautified than in the shady, quiet vale of prosperity. There natural roughness is softened and toned; there weakness gives place to healthy hardiness, and childish instability to manly fortitude and perseverance. You do not expect an exotic to flourish all the year round in your open garden. You do not leave your hot-house plants exposed to the keen frosts of winter. They have been cultivated in warm, sheltered nooks, and they will perish by exposure. But, on the other hand, you know that yonder laurel, beech, and oak have been cradled in the storm. The winds have fixed their roots the firmer, and you can leave them all the year round to take care of them-So the youth who is a stranger to sorrow is at best a very tender reed. The vigorous and enduring qualities which are so much needed in life's solemn crusade he does not possess. He has had no "baptism of fire," and will be a sorry figure when forced to face the foe. But the young man who has endured hardness as a good soldier—the young man who has so patiently bowed his head before the fierce storm whilst he has perservered in the way—the young man who has tasted the bitterness of lonely grief—the young man who, Œdipus-like, has manfully faced the Sphinx of trouble, and interpreted its painful query, will step forth into life's arena strong to do, patient to endure, and honourable in all. Oh, young brother, do not stagger at your sorrows. Welcome them as teachers sent of God. Listen to their tearful, tremulous voices, for they have great secrets to divulge. They come to robe you for future conflicts; to refresh you for further pilgrimages; to invigorate you for fuller duties. Do not be enamoured of prosperity, for she will grievously deceive you; and do not spurn adversity, for she will graciously instruct you. Sorrow may have a stern face, a gaunt form, and a rough hand, but she will be always true to thee; and if thou wilt be true to her, she will make thee eternal possessor of untold riches.

This suggests that sorrow in youth prepares for early usefulness. Who is better fitted to serve his generation than the man who has right views of life, and who possesses a character well established and tried? Where is the society, where the company, where the church that will refuse a young man, other things being equal, who has such recommendations? And where is the society, company, or church which will readily welcome or long tolerate a young man, be he ever so learned or influential. who estimates men and things wrongly, and whose character is doubtful? I speak to many young men You long to influence your who desire usefulness. fellow-men for good. You thirst to scatter light. hunger for the opportunity of drying some tears of woe. and casting a sunbeam upon some cheerless path. let me tell you that it is by experience that you will be best fitted. We have not long to labour for God in this world, and that process which will most speedily and most effectually qualify for labour should be right gladly If youthful sorrows are sanctified, you may become spiritual pathologists, as skilled for service as the veteran of threescore years and ten. Oh, sirs! think what sorrows have done for workers in past time. of Milton creating for himself a universe because blindness excluded him from the beauties of this world. The "Paradise Lost" is "a fresco painted by an imprisoned artist on the walls of his cell." Think of one now living-Jenny Lind-stirring continents by the sweetness of her voice, and who, when very young, lost that voice for four years. In the hope of its return, she persevered in musical studies of a technical and theoretical order. When the voice did return, she guitted home for study in Paris, but there the verdict of the professor was expressed in the words, "My child, you have not much voice." A year of study passed, crowded with deepest sorrow. Day by day she toiled, and night by night she wept-falling to sleep with the tears upon the pillow, to dream of the home from which she was so distant, and to wake in the morning to be reminded of the saying, "You have not much voice." know how sorrow stimulated her efforts, and chastened her spirit, till she came forth to be admired as much for the sympathy of heart and sweetness of disposition as for the wondrous compass and clearness of her vocal powers. And think of the many faithful ministers of Christ whose names are to-day as household words, because of their extensive usefulness, who learnt to touch the sensibilities and comfort the hearts of multitudes by having themselves been sorely tried. If you desire to be qualified for noble service, patiently, prayerfully, thoughtfully extract from sorrow all it is designed to yield.

"Heroic souls a nobler lustre find,
Even from those griefs which break a vulgar mind.
That frost which breaks the common, brittle glass,
Makes crystals into stronger brightness pass."

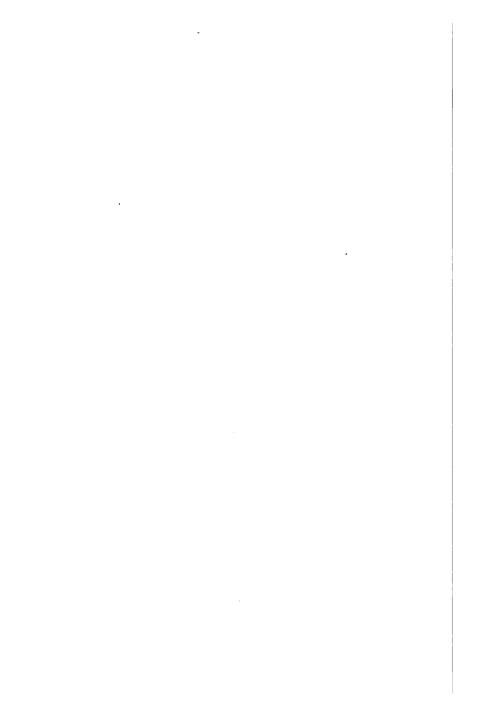
Oh, ye young men who know Christ and serve Him. and who are in sorrow, let not your hearts be troubled. The advantages of adversity in youth are far more numerous than we can catalogue. Eternity alone can disclose the unspeakable benefits of early subjection to "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience." Think of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and who opened not His mouth to murmur when most cruelly treated. Cultivate the spirit of acquiescence in the Divine Father's will. Peacefully accept what Heaven tenderly appoints. Like Jonathan, take the honey from the end of the rod. Treat your sorrows as though you already saw the rich harvest of fruits which spring therefrom. Learn the lesson which a pious old man once conveyed to his travelling companions. The old traveller was sitting with his back to the horses. So, seizing his position as suitable for enforcing a Divine truth, he said, "You see, I have one great advantage over you. Your position enables you to see every stone, every precipice, and bad piece of road before you come to it, while sitting where I am I can only see them when they So it is with the evils and trials of life. to look upon them as you will do when you have got beyond them; and then what is to you now a subject of disquietude will become matter of thankfulness." Oh. sirs, look upwards and onwards to the time when that same voice which was heard near the gates of Nain shall say to you, "Young man, arise!" Remember that a morning without clouds will soon dawn, that the period of Divine interpretation is fast approaching, that the hour is on the wing when judgment shall no longer tarry. Be it yours to anticipate the time when all discrepancies shall be reconciled, all mysteries disclosed, and all dealings vindicated—when beauty shall never wither, health never languish, love never wane, joy never fade, want never intrude, sickness never sadden, death never divide.

But what shall I say to you—young man—who as yet have not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel? What can I say? Are you wedded to grief? Will all the threshing, and bruising, and winnowing through which you are passing not separate you from sin and the world? After God's wooing voice has failed to draw you to Himself, will not His rod drive you? I can but commend you to the tender mercy—the infinite forbearance of the Divine Saviour. May God be merciful to you, and bless you, and incline your heart to seek His face!

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LECTURE XI.

SAUL OF TARSUS; OR, CONTEMPT OF GOD'S SERVANTS.



LECTURE XI.

SAUL OF TARSUS; OR, CONTEMPT OF GOD'S SERVANTS.

O rights possessed by mortals are so sacred and so precious as the rights of conscience. No conthins precious as the rights of conscience. No earthly power should infringe on the domain of a man's religious liberty. Each for himself, as answerable to the Eternal Judge, must be permitted to adopt his own religious opinions, and worship the Supreme Being in harmony with the dictates of the sovereign voice within. No external control should fetter him. No legal enactments interfere with him. No civil authority make demands of him. Nothing beyond moral suasion should ever be employed by one man or body of men, to effect a change in a brother's faith or religious practice. There should be full liberty to all—liberty to embrace what creed they prefer, and to engage in whatever manner of devotion they please, so long as their creed and practice do not encumber or restrict the civil and religious liberty of others. The mind of man is freeborn, and will not cease to exercise its royal prerogatives to inquire into all themes, scrutinise all claims, and elect according to its own inclinations.

[&]quot;You may fetter the eagle's wing, no more through the clouds to soar;

You may seal the mountain's spring, that it leap to light no more;

But the mind let none dare chain, better it cease to be, Born not to serve but reign—God made it to be free."

Unhappily, this precious right men have been slow to recognise. Most terrible have been the conflicts by which our present religious liberty has been secured. The steps leading to the honourable and happy experience of this nineteenth century in our country have been steps through fire and through blood. A malignant or misguided intolerance has made shameful and saddening demands. As offerings upon its altar mountains of flame have ascended and rivers of blood have flowed. One of the earliest attempts to stamp out Christianity comes under consideration now, and of one of the most eager persecutors I have to speak.

Saul of Tarsus was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee." We know very little of his To his father he alludes when he says he is "the son of a Pharisee," but he makes no important reference to his mother. It would have been profoundly interesting to have a picture of his home life—a portrait of his parents—a description of the character of those to whom, under God, he was indebted for all. History and observation prove that great men have possessed mothers of remarkable character. The mother of such a son as Saul of Tarsus must, methinks, have been an extraordinary woman. Paul writes about his sister and his sister's son. I wish he had told us something about her whose arms were his childhood's city of refuge, whose knee was the desk for his earliest lessons, and the tribunal for his juvenile faults. We must, however, be

content with the evidence that his parents followed the strict regulations of the Jewish faith, and doubtless trained their child accordingly. The privileges of the chosen race became his by circumcision, and he would from his childhood be taught according to the Mosaic rules as given in the 6th and 11th chapters of Deuteronomy.

We cannot fix the exact period of Saul's birth. Some think it was in the year 2 of this Christian era. We cannot say what was the social position of his parents, whether they were in circumstances of affluence or But "we have the great satisfaction of knowing the exact features of the scenery in the midst of which his childhood was spent. The plain, the mountains, the river, and the sea still remain to us. The rich harvests of corn still grow luxuriously after the rains in spring. The same tents of goats' hair are still seen covering the plains in the busy harvest. There is the same solitude and silence in the intolerable heat and dust of the summer. Then, as now, the mothers and children of Tarsus went out in the cool evenings and looked from the gardens round the city, or from the terraced roofs upon the heights of Tarsus. The same sunset lingered on the pointed summits. The same shadows gathered in the deep ravines." It is impossible to say how much such beautiful scenery developed the taste of the youth. Moreover, Tarsus was a busy place. The wharves, which stood on the banks of the Cydnus. were the scenes of great commercial activity. It is not difficult to imagine the young Saul mingling, boy-like, with the curious, to see the strange costumes and hear the diverse dialects of the foreigners who came thither to trade. From such sights and associations he learned

much of human nature. Though Tarsus was celebrated for its learning, yet it is very improbable that the young Saul would be sent to any of the Gentile schools. would be instructed in the rudimental branches either at home, or at some small school connected with the Jewish Synagogue. At the same time he would learn a trade, for it was a Jewish custom that all boys, of whatever social grade, should be initiated into the branches of some particular business. A Talmudic writer says three things were commanded of a Jewish father toward his son-viz.: "To circumcise him, to teach him the law, to teach him a trade." The business selected for Saul was that of a tent maker, a trade at that time regarded as very profitable. Whilst yet only a lad, somewhere between ten years of age and thirteen, he was sent from home. Bidding "farewell" to those dear to him, the youth stepped on board one of the trading vessels lying in the Cydnus, and soon lost sight of Tarsus, the place of his birth.

Disembarking at Cæsarea, he commenced the journey toward the metropolis of Judæa. With what mingled feelings must he, a young Jew, have trodden the Holy Land, and with what wondering reverence and interest must he have gazed for the first time upon the buildings of the beautiful Jerusalem. The school which Saul entered was that of Hillel, of which one of the most eminent and honoured doctors was Gamaliel. At the feet of this reverend man the youth became an earnest student; and, whilst thus engaged in Jerusalem, it is not improbable that he may have been present at some Jewish festival at which also Mary and Joseph, with the child Jesus, were present—ay, it is more than likely that one of the doctors of whom the youthful Jesus

asked questions was Gamaliel, the tutor of Saul. character and teaching of Gamaliel were just such as to develop in Saul that integrity and candour, that desire to acquaint himself with Greek literature, and that resolute enthusiasm for the rites and laws of the Jews of which we find so many indications in his subsequent career. Whither Saul went after the completion of his training in Jerusalem we cannot say. Possibly he returned to Tarsus. There is a silence concerning many vears of his life. I think we may, however, conclude that Saul married, and had one or more children, and that he followed wife and children to an early grave.* I think this from the fact that Saul was a member of the Sanhedrim, the necessary qualification of membership being that the judge should be the father of a family, as such were deemed more disposed to look on matters mercifully. Whilst thus a member of the Sanhedrim, there was brought before him and his brethren in office a leader of the new faith. False witnesses were found to accuse Stephen of blasphemy, and to answer to the charge the man of God was arraigned before the seventy Saul gave his opinion against Stephen, and the servant of Christ was condemned to death. A scene of disorder instantly followed. Stephen was dragged from the council-hall to the place of execution, and so deep-seated was the opposition, or so great the curiosity of Saul, that, irrespective of the dignity due to his office he went forth to witness the execution. There he became custodian of the garments of the witnesses who, according to the law, were required to cast the first There he heard the pious protomartyr plead with heaven for his murderers, there he witnessed the

See Conybeare and Howson vol. i., pp. 87 and 95.

strength and stability of a Christian's faith, there he saw how peacefully and triumphantly a follower of Jesus can pass away to his celestial reward.

But a sight so impressive did not soften the heart of Indeed, he became more eager to persecute the followers of Christ. Far and wide he became known as a cruel, relentless inquisitor. He "made havoc of the Church." He entered into the privacies of homelife, tore men and women from the domestic circle, and committed them to prison; he caused the Christians to be scourged "in many synagogues;" he exerted himself to the utmost to lead them to blaspheme the name of Jesus; he put them to death. In his own words. he was "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious." Being exceedingly mad against the disciples of the Lord, he persecuted them unto strange cities. ing that there were some Christians to be found in Damascus, he obtained authority and commission from the high priest to go thither and bring them bound unto Jerusalem to be punished. It was on that eventful journey, when he was panting for human blood, "like a hound when his scent of game is getting intolerable," that he was suddenly stopped. It was then, when his heart was intent on crushing the very name of Jesus, that he saw that Divine One, and heard a voice from the heavenly world, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the A change in his nature followed. character took on a brighter and nobler type, and Saul from that time forth was among the prophets. As Chrysostom remarks, "Christ, like a skilful physician, healed him when his fever was at the worst." None could be more painfully conscious of the error he

had committed as a young man in thus contemptuously and cruelly treating the Lord's servants than Saul, as his subsequent allusions suffice to show.

Now, I point to Saul as a beacon to all you young There is too generally a disposition to treat with scorn and contempt those who make an open profession of discipleship to Christ. Thank God the days of licensed hostility, the days of banishment, imprisonment, and death for Christ's sake, have passed from this land; but there is still lingering, and often displayed, a latent dislike to godly people. The failings of a few are employed as if they were the features of all the saints. The mistakes of one are laid at the door of all. Because hypocrisy and gross sin are discovered in the careers of some prominent professors, professors generally have come under the lash of condemnation. Particularly ready thus to denounce Christian people have the young men of recent times become. You cannot converse with young men who are engaged in large warehouses and manufactories without learning this. One will tell you how he is jeered at because he associates with pious people, and is daily the object of ridicule when his roommate sees him bow the knee in prayer. Another will testify that his comrades in the office or work-room take every possible opportunity of decrying Christianity, and of catching him in disputes. And a third will lament that in the institute or club of which he is member scorn is poured on all religious creeds. I speak now to some who in their own personal experience have proved the truthfulness of these remarks, and have again and again sought strength from the Invisible One to enable them to remain true to conscience and to Christ. To you I say, Stand firm!

See that the conviction of duty is well laid as the foundation of all your words and ways. See that your grasp of the promises of God is unflinching. See that your dependence is not on self, which is as a rope of sand, but on the Saviour, who is the Rock of Ages. Then neither opposition, nor mental difficulty, nor social disaster shall cause you to falter in your faithful testimony for the truth of Jesus. As you find that the offence of the cross has not ceased, see to it that you cultivate the spirit of the confessors. Be not ashamed of the noble crusade against sin, and hell, and sorrow in which you are engaged. Catch the spirit of your Master. Remember you are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and be heroic!

In this the lordlier chivalry?

Uprouse ye now, brave brother band,
With honest heart and working hand.

• We are but few, toil-tried, but true,
And hearts beat high to dare and do;
Oh! there be those that ache to see
The day dawn of our victory!
Eyes full of heart-break with us plead,
And watchers weep, and martyrs bleed;
Work, brothers, work, work hand and brain,
We'll win the golden age again.
And love's millennial morn shall rise,
In happy hearts and blessed eyes;
We will, we will, brave champions be,
In this the lordlier chivalry."

"Oh! who would not a champion be,

But mayhap there is a young man here who has in days past taken part in annoying God's servants—who only recently may have spoken very derisively of, or acted very harshly towards another, simply because of his religious tendencies. Let me, then, ask you, my friend, why you have thus felt and acted? Let me entreat you to examine your own heart, to dissect carefully your own motives for the discovery of the reason. You will find it covered by the very words of Paul, who, when writing to Timothy, said, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief;" or by his words before Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which things I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them." You will discover that prejudice derived from early training, and total ignorance of the nature, beauty, and blessedness of true religion, are the reasons why you have evinced such contempt for God's servants. It may be that the parents who should have pointed your infant eyes to Jesus never attempted to lift the mental vision above the earthly. It may be that both father and mother were themselves unbelievers, and never spake one word in commendation of a religious life. In such an unhealthy atmosphere you grew up to despise wisdom's ways, and to shun the followers of the Nazarene. If such was your experience, are you playing a prudent, sensible, manly part to spurn from you and sneer at what you and your parents knew nothing about? Perhaps they decried total abstinence -do you do the same without further thought? Perhaps they disliked the Vaccination Act-do you, therefore, condemn that Act without a consideration of its pros and cons? Perhaps they ridiculed the prevailing theory of the earth's rotundity-do you, therefore, believe

the earth's surface to be flat? Are you not very ready with the apostolic advice, "Prove all things?" Why, then, do you not apply that rule to religion before you condemn it and its professors?

But, supposing you had a religious training—supposing you were early made acquainted with the theory of the Gospel, you are experimentally unacquainted with it. You speak and act in ignorance, when you ridicule God's saints. You are ignorant of the hallowed peace true piety begets-ignorant of the blissful hope it inspires-ignorant of the Divine joys it develops-ignorant of the noble principles it inculcates-ignorant of the rapt visions it bestows-ignorant of the lofty life it enforces—and how dare you speak against what you know nothing of? Do you accustom yourself so to act in your business or professional calling? Do you criticise and condemn a book you have never read? you consent to purchase wares you have never seen? Do you decry a speculation you have no information about? Oh, young man, be careful how you treat the religion of Jesus, and those who have tasted its value and vitality. First come yourself and participate of the Bread of Life—first test the healing properties of the balm of Gilead-first try the unerring skill of the Great Physician-and then, if the hunger of your soul finds no satisfaction, if the malady of the spirit be not healed, and the heart be left restless and joyless, then you shall be at liberty to say what you list.

> "Oh, make but trial of His love, Experience will decide How blest are they, and only they, Who in His truth confide."

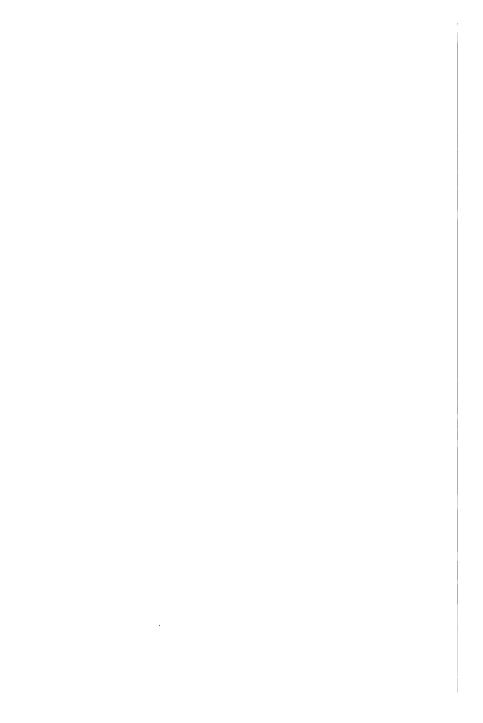
But, till you have made that trial, be cautious how

you treat the servants of God. Remember that it is written, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy." Remember that Jesus scrupulously espouses the cause of His own people, and has assured us that any persecution of them is persecution of Him—that he who toucheth His saints toucheth the apple of His eye. Ay-remember, sirs, that history is crowded with instances in which the retributive Providence of God has painfully visited those who have opposed His saints. Herod the Great, the first persecutor of the Christians, Herod Antipas, who beheaded John, and Herod Agrippa, who killed James, the brother of John, and put Peter in prison, suffered terribly in their future career, and died inglorious deaths. Pontius Pilate, who condemned Jesus, was soon deposed from his office, and died by his own hand. Ananias, the high priest, who persecuted Paul, was slain by his own son. Nero was forced to beg assistance. Domitian, who banished John to the isle of Patmos, was murdered by his own people. Caius, Severus, Heliogabalus, Claudius, Herminianus, Decius, Gallus, Valerian, Maximinius. Dioclesian, and other emperors, were all brought to suffer personally or relatively, and to die most lamentable deaths as the visitation of God. And still nearer our own times, as though the Eternal One would show us that His justice is the same in all ages, we read of Philip II. of Spain, the inventor of the inquisition. smitten with a most painful disease, which no physicians could cure, living a life of inexpressible pain and agony from a malady which years afterwards was his death. Henry II. of France, who violently persecuted the Protestants, and said concerning one, "These eyes

shall see thee burnt," was a little while afterwards wounded in the eye so that he died-without seeing the execution of the person he condemned. Henry III., while Duke of Anjou, took part in a council at St. Cloud when the massacre of the Protestants was resolved upon. In that very council chamber he was some time afterwards coolly stabbed by a friar. The Duke of Guise, and the Duke of Aumale, who were the principal agents in the persecution of Protestants of France, and Charles IX., in whose reign the massacre occurred, all fell victims speedily afterwards. In the persecution of the Waldenses the murderers were frequently visited with the judgments of God. And coming to our own land we may instance case upon case, Gardiner, Bonner, Arundel, and many more whose names time would fail us to catalogue, who have passed away ingloriously with the stigma of Heaven's evident disapproval. All these, and other instances, only teach us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and that the Eternal One will not suffer the sins against Him and His people to go unpunished. Ay, we could narrate cases which have come within the reach of our observation, which unmistakably prove that there is a God that judgeth in the earth. Hence I say-young man be be careful! You deal not only with men but with God. While you think you are fighting only with the mortal. and treating with indifference only creatures like yourself, take heed lest you hear, when too late, the words ringing in your ears, "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker."

LECTURE XII.

EUTYCHUS; OR, INDIFFERENCE AT DIVINE SERVICE.



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EUTYCHUS; OR, INDIFFERENCE AT DIVINE SERVICE.

UTY is far more important than life; where the two cannot exist together, the latter should surrender to the former. There is always safety where the will of God is conscientiously performed. dangers dog the steps of the man who turns from divinely-appointed work to gratify human desires. This the apostle Paul felt. Hence he said, when journeying to Jerusalem where cruel persecutions awaited him, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." On this noble, lofty, safe, and dignifying principle, Paul acted; and an instance thereof is found in the brief record of his doings at Troas.

He was about to sail on the morrow, when on the first day of the week he joined the Christians at Troas in solemn worship, and in the observance of the Lord's Supper. His time with them was drawing to a close, and he felt supremely anxious to accomplish all the good he could in Christ's name in the few hours remaining. Instead, therefore, of consulting the re-

quirements of his own physical system—instead of retiring to rest that he may be fitted for the next morning's embarkation and voyage -- he continued earnestly preaching and replying to questions all night. It was "break of day" before he ceased. It was not three weeks since the passover—the sun then set about seven in the evening, and rose about five in the morning -hence the night must have been about eight hours in length. All of which time the self-denying servant of Jesus devoted to the glorious work of seeking the spiritual well-being of the people of Troas. The assembly he addressed was gathered in an upper room. night was dark, for the moon was then but a faint crescent. In the chamber were many lamps, the smoke and heat of which must have increased the impurity and oppressiveness of the atmosphere. The windows-which were simply cuttings through the wall, with shuttersas glass was not then known-were open. In one of these recesses sat a young man named Eutychus. grew inattentive toward midnight, and presently fell into a sound sleep. The shutters of the aperture where he sat being open, there was nothing to prevent his falling; and so it happened that the congregation was suddenly alarmed by this youthful listener unconsciously dropping from his elevated position into the court below. Immediately confusion and cries of sorrow ensued, amid which Paul, retaining his self-possession, and influenced by strong compassion for the youth, hastened to the spot where the body lay. Having stretched himself upon the helpless lad-as Elisha did on the Shunamite's son-he restored him to life again. Then turning to the congregation, he pacified their excited feelings, and dispelled their grief by crying, "Trouble not yourselves,

for his life is in him." The apostolic preacher then returned to his former position, and continued his solemn service till the dawn.

Now, the conduct of Eutychus has been differently Some have offered apology for the young It has been said that the prolongation of the service was the cause of his slumber. It has been also said that the smoke of the many lamps overpowered the youth, and that thus exhaustion, heat, and weariness must be an excuse for the young man's apparent negligence. I do not wish to be hard upon Eutychus but I desire to point out considerations on the other side which rather impress one with his indifference. be remembered that there were persons of all grades, and callings, and ages in that congregation who kept awake till the morning. Let it be remembered that of all present least liable to the influence of the smoke and heat was Eutychus, for he sat in the aperture of the open window, where the fresh air from without could be enjoyed by him. And let it also not be forgotten that he was a young man-full of the energy and self-control of youth. Then I think it becomes questionable whether he is to be so generously exonerated from all blame. Had his attention been fully fixed upon the soul-stirring truths which the apostle enforced; had he been anxious to embrace those blessed tidings which Paul announced; had he been alive to the momentous relationships of that farewell meeting with the preacher, he would have contended with fatigue, would have forgotten the heat, and would have been as wide awake as the rest of the auditory. I cannot think of Eutychus as any other than a saddening illustration of indifference at Divine service.

The ordinances of God's house have ever been, and

will ever be, the joy and strength of true saints. The words of the Psalmist will ever express the deep feelings of Christ's followers, when he said, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." But, alas, the engagements of the world are so absorbing, and the vanities of life so insinuating, that too frequently the sanctuary is slighted, and the solemn services thereof are profitless. Even among professedly sincere Christians there is often a forgetfulness of the nature of the place where they are assembled, and the seriousness of the duties they are called to discharge. The joys or sorrows, successes or failures, hopes or fears, which are entirely secular, are permitted to intrude on the religious exercises, and mingle with and mar the most sacred feelings. is too much drawing nigh to God with our hps, and honouring Him with our mouths, whilst our hearts are far from Him. Did the Divine Heart-searcher speak to us in our public assemblies, methinks He would often say, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons, and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I. cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." Solomon knew what a firm grip the vanities of the world laid upon the affections and thoughts of the worshippers when he wrote: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the

sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil."

Suffer me to point out a few of the ways in which indifference, in relation to the services of God's house, is at present exhibited. Though I address young men specially, let it not be thought that what I now say applies alone to them. There are many who need to be very often placed before the portrait of Eutychus. There are men and women of all ages who will do well to lay to heart the lessons suggested by our present subject. With all kindliness, then, let me ask you to note:

That indifference is manifest by entering late. A person fully alive to the decency and solemnity becoming the house of the Lord will make a rule of being in his place at the beginning of public worship. I am willing to allow that now and then unforeseen circumstances may interfere with such a rule, and cause the worshipper to be behind time. In such a case I would say better come late than not come at all. But he who thus finds his plans once interfered with, will be only more anxious to avoid a recurrence of such an event. There are many, however, who will allow a mere trifle to detain them, who from thoughtlessness are late, and who make no effort to be punctual. These will be found to be the very persons who through six days of the week are hindered by nothing but illness from a most regular and timely attention to secular pursuits. I have known a young man ready to start for the City by the early omnibus every morning, from Monday to Saturday, so that the omnibus conductor reserves his seat, and waits for him at the turn of the road, who on the Sabbath seldom enters the sanctuary till a considerable portion

of the devotional service is over. This displays a lamentable indifference to prayer and praise, which form so important a part of public worship. It displays also a want of consideration for the feelings of others; for a man who enters late cannot do so without more or less distracting the attention of those about him. A Christian female—a very model of punctuality—was once asked how it was she was always in her place before service commenced, when she answered, "It is a part of my religion not to disturb the religion of others." In a recently published volume, entitled "Daniel Quorm," which gives the portrait of an old Cornish class-leader of the Weslevan Church, there are some striking but quaint remarks made by "Daniel" on this very matter, which I cannot forbear quoting. He says, "Do you remember what is wrote down in the Gospel o' Luke, in the eighth chapter an' the fortieth verse? There's a secret for hearin' well. 'The people gladly received Him, for they were all waiting for Him.' That's it; they were all waitin' for Him. They didn't come rushin' in after He had come, makin' everybody lose a word or two while they turned round to see who it was, an' distractin' the mind o' that blessed Preacher. . . O' course you wouldn't come in during prayer; that's a real sin, I do count, when all the rest is tryin' to lift their thoughts to heaven, for somebody to come in a-draggin' em all down to earth again, an' makin' 'em forget the King o' Glory for to open their eyes an' see who 'tis come patterin' into the place! If the Devil was to come to chapel (an' I b'lieve he do come now an' then), I'm sure he'd come in while they were prayin', an' he'd push past everybody up to his own corner, an' if he could knock over a hat or a pair o' pattens, 'twould please 'en all the more.

. . . I'm sure our Father in heaven cares for the looks o' things. He wouldn't make a tree good for food without makin' it 'pleasant to the eyes.' The Book says, 'Strength and beauty are in His Sanctuary.' And now, seemin' to me like as if this comin' late, and lookin' all about, an' hearin' anyhow, is a sort o' chippin' off the beauty an' spoilin' it all." There is solid, weighty truth in these religious notions of Daniel Quorm. I commend them to you, dear sirs, for your serious consideration.

Indifference to religious services is also displayed by inattention during worship. It is sad to think of the slight attention paid by many to the prayers, praises, and preaching in God's house. Men's minds will sink to terrible depths of vacancy and heedlessness, and will rest there, unless they are watchful. Persons whose native politeness and good breeding would be staggered at the thought of not seriously heeding the words of a friend on whom they may call will allow their thoughts to be diverted from the message of love sent from the Eternal King. And persons whose self-respect would forbid them entering your house, and talking on and on for three-quarters of an hour nothing but nonsensical pretensions, hypocritical professions, and baseless lies, do not mind entering God's house, speaking to Him without either thought or feeling, singing words they do not feel, making avowals they have never weighed, and saying "Amen" to petitions for favours they care nothing about. What is wanted is a more thorough realisation of the dignity of the Being into whose presence we enter when we come to His courts. Because some of our fellow men have run to the extreme of superstition in relation to the sanctuary and its belongings is certainly no reason why we should run to the other extreme of irreverence. Nothing is gained, but very much lost by reducing the standard of solemnity with which the exercises of God's house should be regarded.

Now, this inattention sometimes exhibits itself in levity. You will see occasionally some interchange of thought between two or more of the audience which leads to a suppressed laughter—or to some other outward indications of the absence of all seriousness. confess that I have not to complain of that with you who are my regular hearers, but I have sometimes been pained by witnessing it in others. Then you will see the levity shown by a rude, restless, inquisitive staring hither and thither—at this one's costume, and at the other's position in the church—or in a taking from the book-ledge the various books employed in Divine worship and vacantly turning over the leaves, especially the fly leaves, to see whose books they are, and where the owner lives. All such conduct is unbecoming the House of God.

Where this is not the case you may sometimes see the inattention take another form, that of sleep. The person settles himself down, in the corner of the pew, if possible, and puts himself in a posture favourable for drowsiness. I have already said that some have offered excuses for Eutychus falling asleep. If those excuses are worthy of reception for him, they are not so for you. Eutychus was present at a service of six or eight hours' duration, but men now deem one hour and a-half ample. Everything is done to make the service of the sanctuary attractive and arousing. Neither portion of the engagements is protracted to wearisomeness. Nor can it be said that the pulpit is to be blamed for the somno-

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lence of the pew. As a rule, the sermons of the present day are of a far more elevated and energising order than those of former days. But if men slept under the preaching of a Paul—a prince of pious rhetoricians—we who minister now in holy things must not be depressed by human nature exhibiting the same weaknesses. yet we are saddened beyond words to witness the utter indifference which men thus display in relation to the most momentous of all matters. It must surprise the angels to see a man whose immortal interests hang upon so slender a thread—whose time in this world to prepare for eternity is so portentously brief-making the house of God a dormitory and using the voice of the sacred preacher as an infantile lullaby. A Puritan divine says. "Sleep is the image of death, saith the poet; and therefore the church-sleeper is a dead corpse, set in his pew like a coffin, as if the preacher were to make his funeral sermon." Oh, sirs, keep awake! and keep reverent! Angels watch over you, the Triune Jehovah is observing you, devils are striving to deafen your ears and harden your heart, whilst God's ambassador is inviting you to Christ. Two orders of invisible beings are in the house of prayer, anxiously concerned in the results of the religious service. Such is not the place nor the time for sleep or levity. Rather should you feel and say with Jacob at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place!"

There is one other way in which indifference to Divine service is often displayed in these times. I refer to profitless conversation and prolonged gossip before or after service. It is very natural and very desirable that when friends meet at the house of the Lord they should give a kindly recognition to each other. But it is neither necessary nor right that all the doings of the past week,

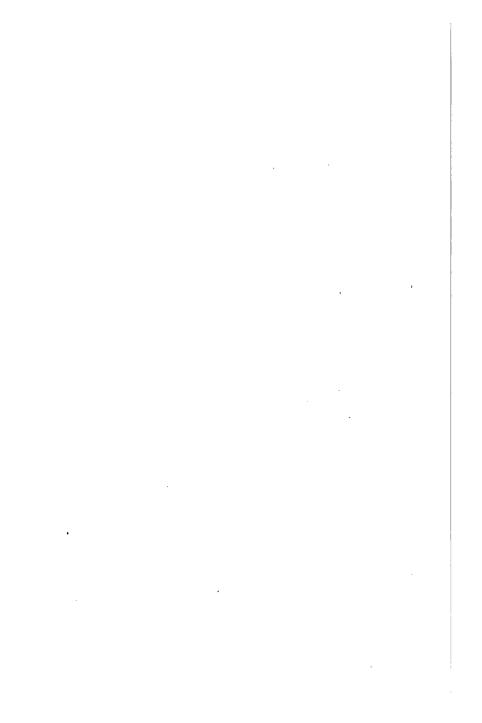
or all the engagements of the coming week, should form the subject of conversation. Depend upon it that the good often derived by a service is irretrievably scattered to the winds by the chat which takes place after that service. Men come to the serene wells of salvation, and earnestly seek the crystal water of life, but they rise from their seats and incautiously spill all before they reach their homes. There is one thing I dislike to see at any place of worship, that is, the congregation of young people and others just outside the sanctuary, when the service has terminated. I have seen it so in some places, and when I have observed it, I have felt that the ravenous birds of the air were then devouring the good seed which the servant of Christ had just sown with toil and tears. Apart from the injury the worshippers thus experience, there is mischief done to passers-by. The worldling knows full well that there is a monstrous incongruity between one moment sharing in the most solemn of all life's duties, and the next to be laughing and talking upon the most ordinary affairs of life. It is no wonder that the scoffer often points to the little companies of gossips outside the doors of our churches and chapels as a proof of the apathy, unconcern and pharisaism with which the religion of Christ is held. Young man, if you have ever erred in this direction, I pray you for your own sake avoid that error in the future. Let it be seen that you value your own soul too highly, that you prize the Word of God too deeply, and that you long for spiritual life too fervently, to forego the advantages of the sanctuary for a light, inquisitive, or talebearing friend.

If you would worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness—if you would feel the refreshing comforts of public

service—if you would receive strength and wisdom from the preached word—if you would be happier, holier, better on Monday for the engagements of the holy Sabbath, then come to Divine service with a prepared heart—come not with heads occupied with secular affairs -come not with hearts contracted and frozen by the carnalities of this life—come not with affections entangled in the productions of earth—come not rashly, thoughtlessly, lightly, but reverently, and in the fear of Men go not into the presence of earthly dignities God. without special preparation. When the Sybarites invited the women to a feast they gave them twelve months' intimation, that they may be prepared. Yet some of us rush into God's house and God's presence at the last moment with undevout and divided hearts. No marvel that we are not blest. When you are thus in the Holy Presence, throw your whole being into the engagements. Shake off all sloth, all inattention, all lukewarmness, and enter with spirit into the praises, prayers and meditations. Remember that soul worship is the soul of worship. The heart, the conscience, the memory, and the affections must be as much enlisted in the service of God as the mouth, the eyes, the hands, the knees. Oh, see to it, that your Bethel never becomes a Bethaven —a house of iniquity. See to it, that Jesus has never to say to you, "My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

LECTURE XIII.

PAUL'S SISTER'S SON; OR, SYMPATHY WITH THE TRUE.



LECTURE XIII.

PAUL'S SISTER'S SON; OR, SYMPATHY WITH THE TRUE.

S you enter the Nunhead Cemetery you will see on. your right hand a lofty monument erected to the memory of the Scottish Political Martyrs. On the basis of that monument are the words of Gerrald, uttered about 1793. They are these-"The experience of all ages should have taught our rulers that persecution can never efface principles." "Individuals may perish, but truth is eternal." How slowly has the world learned this lesson; and yet how repeatedly has it been incul-Truth has been oppressed and beaten down many a time, but, Antæus-like, has always risen again with renewed vigour to contend with, and ultimately conquer, all its fierce opponents. By very painful processes some men have had to learn that, "There is a God that judgeth in the earth"—that the Divine Being who wisely superintends all the affairs of this world will not keep silence when His own word and workers are in danger of falling before the forces of iniquity. Yes: history is full of most marvellous interpositions of Providence on behalf of the right. When cunning schemes have been laid, and cruel plots have been contrived, even with the prospect of success, God has stepped in and caused the wrath of man to praise Him.

An instance of this comes now under consideration. The apostle Paul, as prisoner, was brought before the Jewish Sanhedrim, the council of which, when Stephen was condemned, he was himself a member. result of his address there arose a division of opinion among the judges, which led to such violent contention that the commandant of the garrison, Claudius Lysias, despatched troops to bring Paul at once to the fortress lest harm should befall him. The enemies of the Godfearing apostle, frustrated so far, resolved that by a secret conspiracy they would accomplish his ruin. Forty of the Jews bound themselves by a solemn oath that they would eat and drink nothing till Paul was killed. They accordingly waited upon the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrim, and divulged their vile They proposed that the Sanhedrim should request the commandant of the fortress, Claudius Lysias, to permit the prisoner to be brought once more before the supreme court. They thought it every way probable that their request would be readily acceded to; and then heartless assassins were to be ready in secret to murder Paul on his way from the castle to the court. There is little doubt, had not God interposed, but that this iniquitous plot would have been successfully carried into execution. The commandant knew that the Jewish court had arrived at no decision, through the sudden and unseemly termination to its deliberations, and, not knowing the secret reason why they desired the second appearance of the prisoner, he would in all probability have assented to Paul's visiting the Sanhedrim again. The iniquisitors' plot was complete. Next day was to witness its execution. Already the hypocritical Jews were counting upon the inglorious overthrow of the Christian teacher. Already the forty conspirators exchanged looks of congratulation, as though the despicable deed of blood were done. Little dreamt they that the apostle had enjoyed sweet visions in his solitude, and that the Infinite One had said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me at Jerusalem, so must thou testify of Me also at Rome." Least of all did they imagine by whom their shameful scheme would be frustrated.

Paul's nephew, a young man, had by some means obtained knowledge of the plot. At once, from the cordial affection he entertained for his uncle, and the conviction he had of the apostle's integrity, he hastened to the castle to relate all he knew to the prisoner. We can imagine with what breathless eagerness and with what deep emotion Paul listened to all his young relative had to disclose. Having grasped the particulars, the apostle at once discerned the only human course open to him. Calling a centurion he directed him to lead his nephew to the commandant, that the same information might be laid before him. The officer and the youth withdrew at once, leaving Paul alone with his God. We need not ask how the apostle was engaged whilst his nephew had the interview with Claudius Lysias. As though we stood this moment by his cell windows, we can see him in strong, believing, wrestling prayerprayer that God's will may be done and Christ magnified, whether by his life or death. The commandant listened to the young man's touching story, and tender earnest entreaties. Then, with a heart touched by an unseen finger, and a mind enlightened by a heavengiven light, he decided on his course of action. Summoning two of his subordinate officers, he ordered four

hundred and seventy soldiers to be in immediate readiness to depart for Cæsarea, and convey Paul safely to Felix the Governor: kindly directing that more than one horse should be at the service of the prisoner. nine o'clock that night the party set out, travelling under the quiet cover of darkness; and by daybreak the celebrated preacher was placed under the protection When the morning dawned upon of the governor. which the angry Jews had been calculating with so much hell-born gratification—lo! their infamous plot was completely defeated, for the prisoner was securely resting at Cæsarea. Thus were the deluded enemies of the truth taught their weakness. They saw that they had lost their forejudged game, though the ball had been at their foot nearly to the goal. And thus was the apostle confirmed in his confidence in the Most High. Though craft and cruelty had been combined against him, yet Heaven had splendidly defeated them. Though a prisoner, Paul was happier than a potentate. could sing in words which it is our privilege to adopt:-

"As the bird beneath her feathers
Guards the objects of her care,
So the Lord His children gathers,
Spreads His wings and hides them there;
Thus protected,
All their foes they boldly dare."

Now, under God, the deliverance of the apostle was due to the courageous, energetic, and faithful efforts of his nephew. The instrument the Eternal One employed to defeat the wicked counsel of those desperate enemies was a young man—a young man of sterling character, of strong convictions, of heroic determination, and

ready action. Paul's sister's son will ever be renowned and admired as one who in difficult circumstances, at untold peril to himself, was bold enough to speak and act in defence and deliverance of the true. I present him to you as an example you will do well to imitate. Ever and anon, during your life-pilgrimage, there will be times when you will have to take your place for or against the cause of truth and righteousness; when the assertion of your conscientious opinion may involve you in difficulty for a time, or expose you to abuse and injury; when to attempt neutrality will only place you between the fires of both contending parties, and pillory you as a fool before the world. In all such circumstances, when truth is in the balance, when right is on its trial, I beg you think of Paul's sister's son, going, at he knew not what risks, to the castle cell, and to the commandant's office, to speak against the excited Jews, and plead the cause of the ill-used and innocent prisoner.

This youth evidently entertained decided opinions concerning the character and conduct of Paul. Though a relative, there is no doubt he had heard the objections which the opponents of Christian truth had brought against the apostle, and he was acquainted with the nature of the good man's reply. From his mother's lips he doubtless had learned the story of his uncle's marvellous career; and, as he came in contact with others, very probably he would find entirely opposite opinions expressed respecting Paul and his conduct. He had been compelled to form his own decisions, and these were in favour of the apostle. Whilst the multitude was antagonistic, he was firmly convinced of the rectitude of his uncle's position, and hence played the

part he did. So should it be with us in all matters where truth is at stake. Nothing should be accepted blindly without proof. The enthusiastic, entreating, and sensational statements of one side should not be received and followed without testing. Neither authority, anger, nor affection can supplant evidence and argument. There must be a conscientious, candid, patient inquiry. Pilate's interrogation should be ours upon all matters that come under our notice, "What is truth?" persons there are who are instantly enamoured of any new person or new doctrine. They abandon the teacher they have followed for years, and the truths he has propounded, for the new light which shines upon their path. On the other hand, there are persons who resolutely repudiate any novelty. They believe that nothing can be clearer, fuller, better, safer, or more sensible than the views they have received from their forefathers, and that none can be worthy of confidence or esteem who in any way depart from the beaten path of practice in which their ancestors walked. such classes of persons are wrong; they who are carried about by every wind of doctrine, and they who will not advance with the progress of thought. The duty of every man is to bring questions that vitally affect himself and others to the touchstone of Scripture, and then by the aid of enlightened reason form his conclusions. The motto of a wise man's life is aptly given by Paul: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to these words, there is no truth in them." And a decision should be sought most earnestly. It is not enough simply to inquire into the right and wrong, the true and the false. As responsible and influential beings

we should, so far as possible, determine our relationship. Investigation should lead to a positive and pronounced position. He is a coward, or something far worse, who takes up no definite place in the serried ranks of truth or Both cannot be right. Effulgent light can have no fellowship with lurid darkness. "Yes" must ever be the very antipodes of "No." Hence for any man to suppose he can hold with both contending hosts is sorrowfully and shamefully absurd. Such a man must either betray truth or uphold error; either slight holiness or smile on sin; either obsequiously sell the Saviour or insidiously play into the hands of the devil. Divine Lord has spoken unerring words in that familiar sentence, "He that is not with Me is against Me"words which apply not simply to the Redeemer's personal ministry, but to all questions of truth and error, right and wrong in all ages. My brothers, aim to have settled opinions. Seek after clear and definite principles. especially upon all vital questions of religion. Do not allow your mind to oscillate like the pendulum, or wander unchecked like the will-o'-the-wisp. Keep from the dangerous habit into which some young men of the present time have fallen—that of doubting everything. Do not be so egregiously conceited as to suppose your mind stronger and your judgment sounder than that of hundreds of wise and great men who have formed decided opinions on essential questions. But come, as they came, to the consideration of truth with an un-Search for the true as men who dig prejudiced mind. for precious gold. Rest not till you have found this radiant angel of light. Follow where the beams of truth may lead; and when you come to the margin of the infinite ocean of mystery, cast yourself down before

the Great Source of Truth, and, like a little child, accept in calm faith all that cold reason cannot discern.

When you have ascertained the truth, then hesitate not to evince your hearty sympathy and render your earnest support to the truth. Paul's sister's son held decided opinions concerning the excellency of his uncle, and the utter sinfulness of the men who were plotting for his ruin. But that was not enough. He was resolved, youth as he was, to say and do his all in favour of the right. Some persons in his circumstances would have said, "Poor fellow, my uncle is shamefully treated -terribly persecuted. He is a good man and true. There is no doubt that right is on his side. But I dare not do anything to help him. If I were to stir on his side I should only involve myself in much unpleasantness, and perhaps expose myself to personal danger. It is not an agreeable thing to be mixed up with these conflicts of opinion and action. I shall maintain my own peace of mind best by not intermeddling at all. Poor fellow! I wish him well out of his difficulties, and hope some friends will be found to support the right, but I cannot." Not thus thought or spake Paul's Single-handed he was resolved to contend nephew. with opposing error and evil. Though a solitary champion of truth, he was not to be deterred. young and unknown, conscience told him he had a duty to perform. With fixed convictions and deep sympathies, he could not be still and silent. Hence the active efforts he made to save the prisoner—efforts which were crowned with success.

Let us bravely imitate him. Despite threatened opposition, loss, and scorn, let us never shrink from manfully pleading for and supporting the cause of

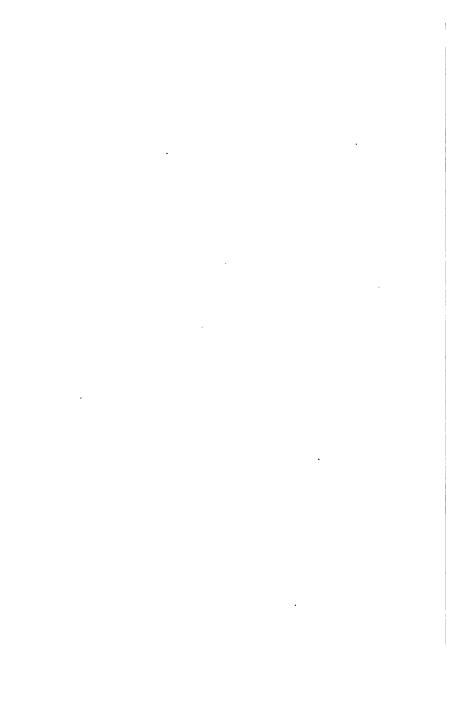
I have heard that in the entrance hall of our Poet Laureate's house may be seen, in encaustic tiles, this motto: "The truth against the world." Such should be the rule of every true man, and especially every Christian. It has been by adopting such a stimulating motto that noble men have blessed the world, and secured to us the privileges we enjoy to-day. When Luther's mind was impressed with the solemn verities of Holy Writ, he visited an old friend, to communicate to him his thoughts and purposes, when the advice given to him was, "My brother, go back to your cell, keep your thoughts to yourself, serve God, and make no disturbance." Had Luther accepted that time-serving counsel, where would have been the glorious Reformation? There are men of the same type now existing as that old friend of Luther; men who say, "You are quite right, but better not say anything about it-your views are perfectly sound, but don't propagate them, it will cause such discussion—there is evil, but don't uncloak it, or there will be so much unpleasantnessbetter go on peacefully, and let error and wrong alone." Such men are very valueless in the stern conflicts between Christ and Belial. They are fearful, fickle, foolish men. "Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit; raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame; wandering stars" seen for a short season, but of little service anywhere. Better far, when a man discovers a truth that burns in his soul, that he should speak it out heroically, even though thereby he be a temporal loser; better far, when a man sees the clear, broad, unmistakable line of duty, that he should boldly pursue it even though he have to fight every step of the

way against fearful odds. That was conduct worthy of remembrance which is recorded of the eloquent American, Henry Clay. He entertained some conscientious ideas which he yearned to embody in some political scheme. On mentioning them to a friend, that friend replied, "It will ruin your prospects for the presidency." "But it is right," said Clay. "Oh, yes; it's right," answered "Then I would rather be right than his friend. president," added Clay. Young brethren, that is the spirit with which to go through life. Say to yourself, "I would rather be right than rich-rather be right than renowned—rather be right than successful in business-rather be right than have the flattery and favour of men-rather sympathise with the true and do my utmost to aid the true than rise to the loftiest dignity of earth by the dirty steps of falsehood and deceit.

Do you need encouragement in order to make such a resolution? Then let me remind you that God is on the side of truth and right, and that therefore these are sure to prevail. For a season the plausibilities of falsehood may be arrayed against the truth, and the subtle pleadings may succeed to mislead many; but as sure as God is in heaven the time will come when the true will shine forth in all its native splendour, and dispel the murky clouds of error. Some writer has said, "Truth is God's daughter." Then depend upon it, the Heavenly Father will vindicate the character of His own darling child, and exhibit her purity, refinement, and beauty to an admiring world.

"Truth, crush'd to earth, shall rise again,—
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error, wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies among his worshippers."

And then suffer me to point you to Christ, who proclaims Himself to be "the Truth"—the embodiment of infinite wisdom. Let me remind you of the integrity and perfection of His earthly career, and of the agony and ignominy of His departure out of life. Let me call to your recollection the wise and weighty words He spake, all of which He will faithfully perform. Let me tell you that all He did, and suffered, and said He designed for your present and eternal happiness. And let me beg you, young friend, to come to that loving Saviour. Depending on, clinging to, and faithfully following Him you will always love the true, will become true yourself, and will secure an entrance into the cloudless realm of superlative light, where truth is triumphant, for "there shall be no night there!"



LECTURE XIV.

TIMOTHY; OR, DEVOTION TO CHRIST.

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LECTURE XIV.

TIMOTHY; OR, DEVOTION TO CHRIST.

TN his early ministry Dr. Lyman Beecher arrived at the church where he was to officiate and found nocongregation. It was a severe winter's morning, and the snow was drifting fast. After waiting awhile a single person entered, walked up the aisle, and took a The minister did not long debate the question whether to preach to the one or not. He commenced the service and went completely through with it as though the church had been crowded. After the service he hastened down from the pulpit to speak to his hearer, but he had departed. Twenty years afterwards, when the Doctor was travelling, he was accosted as he alighted from the coach by a stranger, who said, "Do you remember preaching twenty years ago to a single person?" "Yes, yes," said the Doctor, "and if you are the man I have been wishing ever since to see you." "I am the man, sir, and that sermon saved my soul, made a minister of me, and yonder is my church. converts of that sermon, sir, are all over Ohio." simple incident teaches us how often a Christian worker may be mistaken as to the value and results of his labours: how unwise it is to estimate success in the service of Christ as the world does; and how God

watches over the good seed of the kingdom and waters it with His blessing. Dr. Lyman Beecher's experience was very similar to that of the Great Apostle, as we shall see from a chapter in his ministerial life.

In the province of Lycaonia, in Asia Minor, forty miles west of Iconium, stood the city of Lystra, supposed by the ancients to be under the tutelage of Jupiter. The citizens had erected an elaborate temple to their favourite God just in front of the city gates. Paul and Barnabas visited this idolatrous city to preach Christ. They were regarded as heathen deities, and the priests of Jupiter prepared to offer sacrifices to them. By a speedy reversion of feeling the homage was transformed to hatred, and narrowly escaping death Paul and Barnabas were compelled to quit the city with apparently little good effected. Nothing daunted by persecution, the apostle resolved again to visit Lystra some six years subsequently. He then discovered that the truth he had preached, amid so many difficulties at his first visit, had produced precious fruit. Truly the followers of the Lord were few in number, but there was one disciple to secure whom was worth all Paul's labour and suffering: there was one who was a host in himself—one who was destined to be the centre of an influence for good the circumference of which is worldwide—that one was young Timothy. The father of this youthful Christian was a Greek, and his mother, Eunice, was a Jewess. She, with the grandmother, Lois, were pious Hebrews, and felt it to be their solemn duty to train young Timothy in the ancient Scriptures. Very early in years he was taught his duty to God and men, pointed to the promises of a coming Saviour of the world, told of the signification of Mosaic rites and

burden of prophetic testimony, and encouraged to imitate the noble, heroic, and holy men whose portraits the grand old Book contained. When Paul first preached at Lystra, in the year of our Lord 46, Eunice was brought under the power of the Gospel. Very quickly afterwards—possibly at the same time—her son Timothy embraced Christianity. At once the Scriptures, which had been from early childhood familiar to him, became increasingly significant and precious. Appreciating and applying to his heart the Word of God, he made great progress in the Divine life. He grew in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. So conspicuous was his development, that when Paul visited Lystra some few years afterwards, this young "disciple" was introduced to him as being "well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." The commendation was so deserved and satisfactory that Paul chose him to be a companion of his travels. He saw in the youth the constituents of a good minister of Christ, and doubtless felt that a young believer who could win so much esteem in his own country and among his own kindred could not fail to succeed in the service of the Divine Master among others. But lest he should provoke the Jews and arouse against himself and his message an unnecessary amount of prejudice, Paul first circumcised Timothy. It was not because the apostle believed in the importance of the rite that he desired the young man to submit to it, but simply on prudential grounds. In his enlightened and cautious judgment be saw that he could not expect to secure access to the Jews while Timothy, his companion, was a living protest to their cherished ceremony. In matters of spiritual life and

safety, Paul did not hesitate to teach that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed anything. followed the ordination to the work of the ministry. the presence of "many witnesses," consisting of the members of the infant church at Lystra and the "brethren" of Iconium, Timothy made his confession of faith in Christ and desire to serve Jesus. brethren then laid their hands upon the candidate, and set him apart to the sacred duties of his office. Timothy, who was probably at that time not more than twenty years of age, joined Paul and Silas, and accompanied them on a visit to the churches. Frequent mention is made of the youthful minister as conveying instructions from Paul to the early Christians and preaching the The epistles written by the apostle of the Gentiles to Timothy show how deep was the attachment which existed between the two. It is with paternal tenderness that Paul writes of him as his "son Timothy," "my own son in the faith," "my beloved son," "my workfellow," and "my brother," and the reciprocity of feeling is clearly testified when Paul, expressing his earnest desire to see Timothy, refers to the tears which the young man shed in parting from his spiritual father and friend.† Timothy was with Paul at Rome, and was also imprisoned, though liberated before Paul.‡ When the apostle journeyed into Macedonia he entrusted the charge of the church at Ephesus to his son in the Gospel. Tradition affirms that Timothy retained the bishopric or pastorate of the church at Ephesus till his death: that he was called to

º 1 Tim. vi. 12.

^{† 2} Tim. i. 4. † Heb. xiii. 23.

suffer martyrdom for the truth; that he was buried there; and that subsequently his bones were removed to Constantinople. Respecting the latter part of his career and the end of his days, nothing is definitely or certainly known. All that is recorded leads us to Beginning life with such firmlyadmire the man. rooted attachment to Divine truth; tasting the blessedness of real piety by heartfelt communion with the risen Saviour; dauntlessly professing Jesus in times when the avowal of the Christian faith involved untold sacrifices; and devoting himself to the responsible, arduous, though dignified calling of the evangelical ministry, there is no doubt but that his maturer years were full of holy influence, and productive of most blessed results. With a faith so well grounded and so wisely cultivated, there is every reason to believe that, if called thereto, he laid down his life for Christ's sake with signal composure and triumph.

Dear sirs, I desire to awaken in your hearts an earnest longing to be like Timothy—devoted to the Lord Jesus. It is not the first time that his beautiful life of consecration has been portrayed to you. Not once, but often have you been exhorted to tread in his steps. Other voices than the one that now addresses you have descanted upon the advantages of early acquaintance with The Sabbath-school teacher, whose Divine truths. character you still admire, and whose earnest teaching you formerly received, was accustomed ever and anon to tell of Timothy as a pattern to youth. The pastor under whose faithful ministrations you were first brought, often laid his hand upon your head, and lovingly bade you think of Timothy. That large-hearted and loving father, whose portrait you still preserve in

your album, was wont oftentimes, when you were beneath the domestic roof, to mention the name of Timothy among others who remembered their Creator in the days of their youth. Ah, and not without the tribute of tears do you call to the recollection that fond, thoughtful. pious mother, now sainted, who used to kneel with you at the throne of grace, and plead with God that the mantle of Timothy may fall upon you—her darling boy. And is it so that the entreaties of teacher, pastor, and parents, have hitherto availed nothing? Can it be that the fervent prayers of the pious and precious dead have as yet been unanswered? How then can we expect the preacher's words to be of service? Dear young brethren. it is the same message we bring you that you have received before from some whom you have known better, and loved more fondly. But it is the message of God, and peradventure during its delivery, you may recall resolutions you once formed when voices, now silent in the grave spake to you in tremulous and tearful earnestness.

I ask you to remember that devotion to Christ will promote the dignity of your nature. Whilst we admire brilliancy of genius, and prize high mental attainments, we must allow that these are all nothing in themselves, compared with the dignity of being a Son of God—a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. The weak things of the world in this respect confound the mighty, and things and persons that are despised, rank before those the world enthusiastically admires. As the spiritual surpasses the temporal, as mind is superior to matter, as heaven transcends earth, as eternity outweighs time, so the humblest believer in Jesus exceeds in dignity the richest and wisest unbeliever. The man of thorough

devotion to his Saviour answers the grand design of his being—to glorify God. Consecration to the service of Heaven develops his active capabilities in a manner which his conscience readily approves. It leads him to seek an end worthy of his nobly-endowed nature, and an end which will ever grow more attractive to his gaze. But the man of no piety is altogether missing the purpose of life, and his existence here is, humanly speaking, a failure. It is a poor, mean, degrading thing to be tied down to articles of merchandise, to shops, and desks, and ledgers alone as the great business of life. But it is a noble, elevating, dignifying art that of making worldly occupations subservient to our spiritual demands, and rendering every duty of life a ladder by which our thoughts can climb to a purer hemisphere. It is a poor, mean, ignoble thing to rise day after day simply to be engrossed with the feverish struggle after so much perishable gold-dust, so much fleeting praise and popularity. But it is blessed, ennobling, and kingly to go about our God-allotted duty in the world, be it ever so lowly, with a fervent spirit—a spirit that communes with God and sees Him in everything. You cannot peruse the Holy Volume without being impressed with the disparity between the saint and the sinnerthe man devoted to Jesus and the man opposed to Him. The one is represented by all that is valuable and illustrious, the other by all that is valueless and hateful. The saint is the salt of the earth, a light in a dark place, pure gold, a precious jewel, a lively stone, a wise builder, a good Samaritan, a priest, a king. The sinner is represented by a fool, a debtor, a thief, a lunatic. He is chaff, tares, a wolf, a dog, a viper. Thus by figures of speech Heaven stamps its estimate of the relative position

and character of the two classes of men—they who are for Christ and they who are against Him. And thus are we taught that he who would be truly ennobled, he who would make his life beautiful in the eye of God and in the estimation of right-thinking men must be imbued with the spirit of religious consecration, like Timothy.

Then devotion to Christ will present true and lasting happiness to the heart. You are well aware, brethren, that the craving for happiness is found in the heart of every man, in every region under heaven. That innate yearning will exist and grow, do what you may, until the soul is satisfied by vital fellowship with God. I fully allow the advantages accruing from refined society. I am not unacquainted with the rare pleasures that literature and science can afford. But of themselves these do not and cannot bring man into communion with God, or furnish man with power to overcome evil. It is said of a far-famed poet and noble genius that he

"Drunk every cup of joy;
Heard every trump of fame; drank early, deeply drank;
Drank draughts that common millions might have quenched;
Then died of thirst, because there was no more to drink."

And such has been the experience of scores, aye, hundreds of our fellow creatures. How many of your acquaintances seek to attain happiness by, spider-like, climbing by a gossamer thread of their own weaving. By the gratification of unruly desires, evil passions, and intemperate habits, they have sought to discover the living stream of joy. But the forbidden fruit has proved to be the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah. Very different, however, is the experience of the man

who is sincerely devoted to Christ. With freedom from the guilt and dominion of sin; with a conscience that approves his resolution to follow the Lord; with the assured and felt presence of his Saviour within, and with the bright prospect of eternal joys, we can conceive of no man so happy as the truly upright and decided He is endowed with Divine peace and un-Christian. disturbed tranquillity. I know there may be calmness with prevailing mists upon the sea and sable clouds concealing the sky. But not such is the tranquillity of the godly man. His equanimity of mind, his placidity of spirit, resembles the quietude of a summer's morning, when the sun has scattered all clouds, and tips every tiny wavelet, and tinges every blade of grass with golden tints. The righteous man's pleasure springs from an inexhaustible source. He has a well-spring of perennial He carries within his heart secret consolations which earthly surroundings cannot destroy. His soul can exultingly smile at all the vicissitudes of earth. He can look with serenity on the varied changes in life's panorama of dissolving views. He hears a still small voice bidding him be of good cheer. All things, within and without, become germs of gratification. Intellectual pleasures assume a fairer garb; social comforts exhibit brighter charms, and home delights are intensified. Thus is he truly happy. My young friend, I speak that I do know; I testify from my own experience.

And now let me beg you to observe that the most favourable season in life for devoting one's self to Christ is youth. Then the perceptive faculties are clearest to apprehend truth, and the receptive faculties are strongest to retain truth. Then there is a tenderness and suscep-

tibility. The mind and heart are like the snow which has just fallen, ready to receive the most delicate impression; but in after years, when the keen winds and nipping frosts of the world have been experienced, the heart resembles snow that has for days been exposed to a temperature below freezing-point. There are also beautiful affections unengaged in youth, affections which, like the tendrils of a vine, go out feeling after something to lean upon, something to love. Hence the heart is more easily disposed in this direction or that. It is said that an Abbot of olden time desired a piece of ground for cultivation, but the owner refused to sell it. At length the Abbot induced the owner to take him as tenant, the time of hire of the field being specified as for the period of one crop. The Abbot at once sowed the ground with acorns—a crop that lasted three hundred years. So the devil, knowing the value of the human soul, aims always to get the ground for the first crop. He knows if he can but secure the early thoughts and affections he can render it very difficult to cultivate in that heart the fruits of righteousness. Hence, it is a fact that conversions to Christ in advanced manhood or old age are rare occurrences. The majority of those who unite themselves in fellowship with the Lord's people in all our churches are young, Dr. Cuyler says: -"I have been permitted, during my ministry, to receive nearly one thousand persons into the Church on confession of their faith; and not one dozen of these had outgrown their fiftieth year." Moreover, from what ranks come the most useful and honoured men in the varied departments of Christian enterprise? From the ranks of the young. Time would fail me to tell of the men who now shine as the sun in the kingdom of our Father, and as the stars of first magnitude in the firmament of the militant Church, who, like Timothy, gave themselves to Christ in youth. They were young when they surrendered their will to the Divine Master—young when they said, "Here am I, send me;" young when they began to study to show themselves "approved unto God, workmen that needed not to be ashamed;" young when they first led the public devotions of others; young when they began to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering;" young when they did "the work of an evangelist;" young when they made full proof of their ministry; young, and suffered no man to despise their youth. You see, then, dear sirs, how important is that period of life in which you are found, and how favourable is your present season for devotion to Jesus and His service.

I am addressing some who, by the grace of God, are consecrated to the Saviour. You have been drawn by the cords of Divine love, and are now willing servants From my heart I congratulate you, brothers. A better Lord and Leader you could not have, and a nobler service you could not be engaged in. Suffer me then, to give you the advice given by Paul to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee"—the gift of Divine life—guard it, develop it, exercise it; the gift of intellect—feed it, strengthen it, expand it. "Give attention unto reading,"-reading the best authors; reading for the improvement of the heart as well as the head. "Flee also youthful lusts,"—do not permit aught that is base to contaminate your mind or excite your emotions. "Fight the good fight of faith,"—fight with the evils which abound in the world; the evils which are, alas! too often patronised in society; the evils which are painted and dressed up as angels of light; the evils specially besetting your own career. Seek after integrity of life and consistency of conduct. Let your words and acts accord with your professions. Whilst you are not deterred from usefulness by the fact of your youth, guard against self-confidence, conceit, and forwardness. Do not allow yourself to think you are independent of the public means of grace. And specially see to it that there are not many minutes or hours between the periods of your soul's communion with the Father of spirits. These suggestions faithfully observed, there will await you the truest success in this world; and in the better land, pavilioned with God's glory, signal and enduring honours.

But there are many who are not yet on the Lord's side. "As though God did beseech you by us we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." You are ready to acknowledge the claims of the Eternal One upon you—you do not doubt the reality of what we now say about the blessedness of devotion to Christ, and yet you linger. Oh, why-why should this be the case? You suffer no other matters to remain in such a state of uncertainty. You scorn the man who, in things secular, is vacillating, hesitating, undecided. Questions pertaining to your health, your business pursuits, your property, or your reputation, are not heedlessly left to settle themselves, or relegated to the distant realms of Then, why do you treat your spiritual uncertainty. and immortal interests with such crass indifference? Arise, sirs, and act! Your souls thirst for God, the living God, Jesus waits to be gracious, the Church in its militant struggles with abounding sin wants your pious efforts—we long and pray for your decision—and just

now angelic bands are waiting to burst forth in pœans of gladness over your willing devotion to the Lord. Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life!

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LECTURE XV.

THE YOUNG MAN OF SCRIPTURE; OR, THE PEERLESS PATTERN.

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LECTURE XV.

THE YOUNG MAN OF SCRIPTURE.

N fourteen Sabbath evenings I have invited your attention to the career and character of some of the most prominent young men whose portraits are preserved in Holy Writ. From their lives lessons of the highest value have been deduced, the embodiment of which cannot fail to ensure happiness, holiness, honour, and usefulness in this world, "and in the world to come life everlasting." The series of lectures would, however, be sadly and strikingly incomplete if I did not direct your thoughts to One Young Man whose advent was the matter of prophecy and expectancy for four thousand years—who was typified by ancient Hebrew ordinances, who is the central figure of the inspired Book, around whom reverently gather all the seers and saints, and for whom the Bible is as a burnished mirror, ever reflecting the matchless lineaments of His faultless Some of the young men whose lives I have endeavoured to portray claim our admiration and imitation for certain definite excellences. But this Young Man is pre-eminently worthy of our adoration and devout study, because all excellences brightened to infinitude cluster in plenitude in Him. He combines

in Himself, fully orbed, all the best qualities that can be discovered in the fairest specimens of humanity.

Now, we are mainly dependent for the life of Christ upon the New Testament records, and as these have been, and are being, daringly assaulted, it may be well, just for a moment, to glance at their reliability. Some of the most striking and suggestive events in the career of Jesus are asserted to be fictitious—wholly mythical. Is that at all likely? Is it possible? I answer, No. and that for the following reasons. The features of the age when Christ appeared were entirely opposed to the spread of legendary stories. It was not an age of blind credulity, but of keen inquiry and searching criticism. It was a time when learning was prevalent, when pretensions were tested, when, with philosophic coolness, men were everywhere asking, "What is truth?" is incredible that in such an age a series of stories should have started into existence without foundation. and have found such willing and widespread recipients. Again, the very events which are pronounced fictitious were the great burden of apostolic preaching. Paul at Athens, and when before Felix and Agrippa, preached the supernatural facts recorded in evangelistic history. If these were not facts, but myths, how came such a man as the apostle of the Gentiles to believe them? Was he so weak-minded as to embrace a fable, and spend his life in spreading fiction? Was he the man to carry a fabrication to the philosophic schools—to men who knew how with facility to detect the false from the Moreover, is it credible that Paul, Peter, James, John, and the galaxy of their fellow-helpers, would sacrifice so much, and expose themselves to persecution and death, for a mere myth? Are men so enamoured

of legendary stories? Is it customary for mortals to cling to fables with such a tenacious grasp that they will rather be stoned, beheaded, or cast to the lions, than surrender the fiction?

Besides, if the grand and glorious facts in the life of Christ are myths, how are we to account for the origin and marvellous progress of Christianity? For eighteen hundred years our holy religion has existed as a vital and vitalising power. Amid whole centuries of persecution it has triumphed. Public opinion, intellectual pride, and the customs of social life have obstructed its progress; fines, imprisonments, the scourge, and the block have been devised as impediments; such monsters as Nero, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, contrived all possible means to crush Christianity, but still it lives and spreads. How can we account for this wonderful phenomenon? Only by believing in the supernatural facts which conclusively prove its Divine origin.

Am I told that the myths sprung out of the religious system founded by Jesus? Then I ask how came the followers of Christ, possessed already of a certain theological system, taught by Jesus, to think of concocting these many and marvellous stories about the Christ? When they first became His followers they must have done so from one of two causes, either the doctrines He taught commended themselves to their judgment as truths, or His Divine authority must have awed and won them. If it was the teaching, they never would have conceived it necessary or desirable to use fiction to increase such a teacher's influence. If it was the authority of the teacher that won them, why was not that authority sufficiently

powerful to win others, and wherein did that marvellous authority exist? What was there in Jesus that drew the thoughts, affections, and energies of men unto Him?

Such reflections as these clear the ground of the mythical theory, and leave us with our gospels as reliable narratives of facts. Men of renown, men of great learning, men of undoubted piety, men of undying influence, living in different countries, and at different ages, from the very times of the apostles down to the fourth century, all agree that the Gospel narratives we receive are worthy of acceptance and admiration. Clement, who lived in Rome; Ignatius, who laboured at Antioch; Polycarp, who exercised his ministry at Smyrna; Justin Martyr, who dwelt in Syria; Athenagoras, who flourished in Athens; Irenæus, whose see was in France; Tertullian, who held office at Carthage; Clement, of Alexandria, who travelled in many lands; Origen, of Alexandria; Eusebius, of Cæsarea, and Jerome, of Antioch—all blend their voices to assert that the four gospels were widely known and read, being accepted as genuine and Ay, an uninterrupted succession of writers from the apostolic age to the present time, both friends and enemies, either quote the New Testament writings or make such allusions to them that prove the books were accepted as authentic. We cannot say so much of the best classic authors. The far-famed writings of Xenophon, Tacitus, and Cæsar cannot boast of evidence of genuineness so sure and satisfactory.

Accepting, then, the gospels as authentic histories, 'what do we find? A child born and a son given, amid humble surroundings—increasing "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,"—developing at twelve years of age a marvellous wisdom and a strange

consciousness of His Divine parentage—subjecting Himself to His reputed parents, labouring till He was thirty years of age at the handicraft of a carpenter, and then stepping forth from His retirement to stir society to its deepest depths by His words and works. Whilst John and Mark pass over the thirty years spent in obscurity in unbroken silence, and Matthew and Luke contribute but little to our information concerning that period, yet we know that His childhood, boyhood, youth, and early manhood were sinless and exemplary. "That noiseless battle, in which no clash of weapons sounds, but in which the combatants against us are none the less terrible because they are not seen, went on through all the years of His redeeming obedience." Then when He began His public ministry He went about doing good, working miracles, and inculcating the loftiest lessons, till, whilst yet a young man, He surrendered to the cruelty of those whom He sought to bless, and expired as a sacrifice for human guilt.

In each gospel we have the delineation of a perfect and an unique character. Each evangelist, in recording the life of Jesus, impresses us with the dignity, sublimity, and holiness of that life. Christ's meekness, patience, gentleness, unselfishness, truthfulness, sympathy, love and purity, are conspicuous. Indeed, the character is presented as faultless—free from every stain or blemish—but marked by positive excellences, and these all held in perfect equipoise. The character is thoroughly harmonious. There is not the preponderance of one feature over another. There is no quality which we could desire to see more fully developed, and no trait which we would wish were less conspicuously displayed. This delineation by each of the four inspired historians is un-

conscious—that is to say, they make no direct effort to assert His striking features. They simply pursue the narrative of His life and labours. They tell us whither He went, what He did, with whom He associated, and what He said and suffered; leaving the reader to gather from their narratives what was the character of the The result has ever been that the perusal of the evangelistic records has confirmed the centurion's assertion: "Truly this was the Son of God." An able living author* says: "So far has the many-sidedness and richness of Christ's character transcended the thoughtful analysis of the closest observers that scarcely any man, or section of men, has been able to appreciate more than one of its purely human aspects. The knights of old saw in Him the mirror of all chivalry; the monks the pattern of all asceticism; the philosophers the enlightener in all truth. To a Fénelon He has seemed the most rapt of mystics: to a Vincent de Paul the most practical of philanthropists; to an English poet †-

'The best of men
That e'er wore earth about Him was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit—
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.'"

But where is the man who, after his most microscopic scrutiny of the character of Jesus, has found any fault in him? Had there been any blemish to be detected, it would long ago have been trumpeted throughout the world. History is ready enough to perpetuate the mistakes, and follies, and sins of those who stand in the fierce light of popular scrutiny. But who ever read any record of a sinful act or word attributed to Jesus of

[·] Farrar.

Nazareth? I know that certain critics have classed Christ with Confucius, Mahomet, and Socrates; but neither of those three men was perfect. The character of Confucius has been ably drawn by Dr. Legge, and the insincerity of the man disclosed. Of Mahomet many tales of truthlessness and crime are recorded, whilst Socrates was far from freedom from gross sins. Oh, sirs, to place the thrice-blessed name of Jesus in the same catalogue with any of the celebrities of the past or present is not only to defame that name, but to stamp ourselves with crass ignorance or wilful blindness. Plutarch once wrote: "I would rather, a great deal, men should say there was no such man as Plutarch, than that they should say there was once a Plutarch who ate his own children." So I say better far to deny that the Christ ever lived, than to say He lived, but was no better, wiser, purer, nobler, or diviner than other religious teachers. Confucius in China, Buddha in India, Zoroaster in Persia, and Socrates in Greece, are brilliant names: but what beside? Which of them effected a real reformation of human life? Which of them brought men with childlike confidence to the presence chamber of the Infinite One? Which of them touched, transformed, and toned up the deep secret feelings of the heart from which the life gathers its hue? Which of them has faithful followers in all parts of the world? But the love of Jesus belts the earth. His name sheds its fragrance in all climes.

> "No saint on earth its worth can tell, Nor heart conceive how dear."

Now, granting that the character of this young man was perfect and unique, then it follows that the religion

which He established must be Divine. Again and again during His earthly career Jesus spoke of His Messiahship—referred to His oneness with the Eternal Father, and to the Divine attributes which He claimed. You must be well acquainted with such passages as the following: "Whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in heaven." "Have I been so long time with you, and yet has thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very work's sake." "I and My Father are One." "All things which the Father hath are Mine." "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Thus repeatedly throughout His ministry, and in the immediate prospect of His crucilizion, to His friends and to His enemies, in private and in public, Jesus Christ declared Himself to be the Son of Godone with God, to have come down from God, to possess the attributes of God, and to be the Divine Saviour of the world. Now, He either spoke the truth or He did not. If it be granted that He was truthful, then controversy is at an end, and the Divinity of Jesus is acceded. If, however, it be said that He lied, then some explanation must be offered for such solemn and

repeated declarations. Either, in claiming Divinity He was a gross deceiver, or He was amazingly deceived. To say He was a deceiver is to assert what is diametrically at variance with the character uniformly given Him, even by the opponents of His Messiahship. Indeed, the improbability is far too glaring. No person in history, before or since Jesus, has set himself up as actually the Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient God. It is the very last thing that an impostor would do; for so long as, like Mahomet and others, the impostor represents himself as a servant of the Lord, so long men expect only words and acts within the compass of humanity. But when a man takes the title of God, he at once surrounds himself with insuperable difficulties. From that moment till his final hour, the world expects that he will sustain the part of the infinite, and all he says and does must bear the most microscopic inspection. Besides, if Christ was an impostor, He further created for Himself difficulties when He proclaimed His oneness with the Eternal Father, because of the time-honoured belief of the Jews to whom He spoke. He preached and laboured amongst a people who owned one of their most stringent precepts to be this :- "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Oh, it is impossible that Christ was a deceiver! Even His enemies have pronounced Him a good, great, wise man. Equally impossible is it that He was deceived as to His relationship and prerogatives. If you can conceive of a man believing himself to be what Christ repeatedly asserted He was, without the shadow of claim to such dignity and power, then you conceive of one of the most desperate cases of insanity ever witnessed in any lunatic asylum. We are driven

to the conclusion that the young man known as the Christ of history is none other than the Son of God, the Divine Saviour of the world.

This claim of Jesus to be God-man was supported by the manifest exercise of Divine power. He worked miracles, and He did so to authenticate His professions. When John the Baptist sent his disciples with the query, "Art thou He who should come, or do we look for another?" Christ said, "Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised." So on other occasions He pointed to His miraculous acts, and called on men to believe Him for His work's sake. His miracles were wrought in public, most of them before multitudes of people, and many of them before bitter, keen-eved enemies. Thousands of persons were sharers in the benefits of the supernatural power. names, the dates, and the places are recorded in the gospels, and, the reliableness of those gospels as historic narratives being proved, the fact of the miracles is beyond question. His supernatural works were crowned by the last and grandest of all miracles, His resurrection from the dead. That historic fact is as well attested as any event in history. If any man regard Christ's resurrection as "a deliberate invention" of the evangelist, then I ask him to account for the absence of all attempts to describe the resurrection of Jesus in the gospels. Men with such power as the four evangelists possessed would never have shrunk from a minute description of that last and crowning miracle if they had been inventing the career of this young man. Mark most graphically writes of the miracles of the

Saviour's life, and John portrays the resurrection of Lazarus with very striking effect. It was not, then, from any lack of ability to paint the resurrection that the disciples furnish no minute description of this miracle. If the resurrection had been an "invention," it is such a climacteric portion of Christ's history that an impostor would have spared no pains to make it, in all particulars, stand forth conspicuously. But the evangelists in truthfulness and frankness simply tell us that Christ rose, and then record the interviews which His followers had with Him after His resurrection. The actual rising they could not portray, as John did that of Lazarus, because neither of the disciples witnessed it.

Hold fast, dear young brethren, to the conviction that THE Young Man of Scripture is the brightness of the Divine Father's glory and the express image of His person—that He is Immanuel, God with us—that while truly and properly man, He was invested with powers and properties which no other human being ever claimed or ever exhibited—that His wise and loving words were echoes of God's voice, crumbs from the bountiful table of Divine Omniscience—that His mighty and merciful deeds were exemplifications of the Creator's formative energy and controlling dominionthat His transfiguration was the effulgence of the Godhead bursting through the veil of the flesh—that in the hour of His arrest, when Judas and the ruthless Roman soldiers drew near to seize Him, there was a display of His inherent majesty, so that the awe-stricken host "went backward and fell to the ground"-that throughout the seven journeys, His enemies compelled Him to take, He demeaned Himself as one calmly conscious of kingly innocence—that there was something more than

human in that heart-rending look which touched the conscience of the apostate disciple, and forced from his spirit the bitter tears of remorse—that encircled by ignorance, cowardice, and crime, He was from first to last mentally, morally, and spiritually isolated-and that when He died, He suffered and expired as a representative man, carrying the Atlantean burden of the world's sins. Hold fast to the truth that, having given Himself a ransom for all—which truth is the very marrow of the Gospel-He rose again from the dead, soared within the veil into the glorious recesses of the upper sanctuary, and now, in His sacerdotal office, makes prevalent intercession. Oh, brethren, it was a supernatural, unique, and unparalleled life—a life that laid open the Eternal heart, that concentrated the features of the Divine nature, and that won the admiration and affection of men. I wonder not that Rousseauunbeliever though he was-should write :- "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."

But do not forget that He was truly human, and, as young men, take Him as your pattern. You may learn from Jesus never to be ashamed of honest toil. It was enacted among the Jews that every boy should be taught a trade. All, from the humblest peasant to the high priest, learned some craft. So Jesus followed that of a carpenter; and up till thirty years of age He toiled at fashioning ploughs, making yokes, and mending boats. Had there been aught that was unholy or ignoble about manual labour Christ would never have engaged therein. But He laboured with His own hands to teach the world that toil is a noble and beneficial thing. There has been for many years prevalent

the idea that manual work and vulgarity are inseparable, that freedom from mechanical trade is an evidence of respectability. I am happy to believe that such a notion is gradually dying out. You no doubt observed from the Times of last Friday* that the Emperor of Germany had been presented with an engraving executed by one of his grandsons, and a book bound by another. Adopting the wise and wholesome regulation of the Jews of old, the German royal house requires each male member to learn a craft. The Emperor himself has learned the trade of a glazier, His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince that of a compositor, and his two younger sons those of engraver and bookbinder respectively. There are indications in our own country of a return to wisdom in this matter. Young friend, do not be ashamed of your calling, whatever it may be, so long as you can prosecute it honestly and with a good conscience. If at any time effeminate loungers and ignorant swells treat you with contempt, call to recollection that it was once said of the brightest and best young man the world ever knew, "Is not this the carpenter?"

You may learn from Jesus a second lesson—that a truly noble and useful life may be passed in obscurity. If ever young men needed to be reminded of this, it is surely in these days. The tendency of the times is to force youth to the front, and foster in the breast ambition for place and power. In all spheres of life there is strife for prominence; and, alas! whatever may be the solid worth of a man, he is frequently treated with indifference if he have not distinguished himself by some brilliant achievement, or by incessant struggle in

[•] March 23, 1877.

some exciting arena. But Jesus passed thirty years of His life in comparative obscurity, and only three years in public ministration. He came "to convince us that a relative insignificance may be an absolute importance"—that it is possible to pass our days quietly and unobtrusively whilst we are building up a character that shall be approved of God, and eloquently appeal to men when we are called home to heaven. How little is known of Christ during those years of quietude in Nazareth, and how little is known now of some of earth's choicest spirits, and heaven's chosen servants. Brethren, let us be

"Content to fill a little space, If God be glorified."

You may learn from Jesus another lesson—the possibility of remaining true and pure amid the severest temptations. As a young man He encountered the allurements you are familiar with. The mirage of life was before Him. He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Whatever pertains to man was not foreign to Him. In human sensibilities He identified Himself with our race. But He passed thirtythree years without surrendering His integrity-passed that portion of life which, to all young men, is most fraught with perils without reproach. As a man He cast Himself upon the strength of His Divine Father, and sought help in every season of danger. So, dear sirs, His God and your God, His Father and your Father, waits to sustain and strengthen you. Tempted you are, and will be, as Jesus was. But fall you need not. As St. Augustine says, "It is the devil's part to suggest, it is ours not to consent." If you will but seek aid whence Jesus sought it, you will be able to resist the devil, and stand firm to principle and purity.

And now I invite all of you to this peerless friend, this precious Saviour. His exuberant love embraces all. His expressive words are addressed to all. remedial scheme of mercy is designed for all. delights to transform tears into smiles, and sobs into songs, everywhere. Let every knee bow before such a blessed Being. Let every heart lie low at His feet. Let every eye be fastened on His ineffable beauty, and every tongue proclaim His praise. Would to God, dear sirs, that these lips could adequately describe the attractions of Jesus. But, even then, every one of you would not fall in love with Him and follow Him. A little boy who was born blind was subjected to an ophthalmic operation which proved successful. When he accompanied his mother for a country walk after the operation, and gazed for the first time on the heavens, the earth, the hills, and vales, and meadows, he exclaimed, "Oh, mother! why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" Bursting into tears, the fond mother answered, "I tried to tell you, dear, but you could not understand me." So is it when I speak to some of you about Jesus. My efforts fail to impress you with His winsome glories. I try, and try to my utmost, but all in vain unless the Divine Spirit open the eyes of your mind, and bestow spiritual vision. I can only now refer you to the impressive record of His life contained in the sacred book, with the hope that He who indited the biography may expound the The words St. Augustine heard in his garden at Milan, I repeat to you, "Tolle et lege"—take and read. Take the Bible which is saturated with Jesus and read it, but read it having first supplicated light from above. Search the Scriptures, and you will see Christ's supernal beauty. Search, and you will grow sensible of His supreme authority. Search, and you will feel His thrilling love. Search, and you will yield to His encircling arms. Search, and you will humbly bow before His marvellous divinity. Search, and, with the four-and-twenty elders, you will fall prostrate before Him, and cry, "Thou art worthy to take the book, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood." Search, and, with the principia of a new life, you will soon triumphantly sing with rapturous joy and confidence:—

- "Lord Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine; My Rock and my Fortress, My Surety Divine; My gracious Redeemer, my song shall be now, 'Tis Thou who art worthy, Lord Jesus, 'tis Thou.
- "I will love Thee in life, I would love Thee in death,
 And would praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
 And sing, when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
 'Tis Thou who art worthy, Lord Jesus, 'tis Thou.
- "And when the bright morn of Thy glory shall come, And the children ascend to the Father's glad home, I'll shout, with Thy likeness imprest on my brow, 'Tis Thou who art worthy, Lord Jesus, 'tis Thou."

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